



February 4, 2020

Mr. Russell Vought
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Vought:

The National Coalition for History (NCH) is opposed to closure and sale of the National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA) facility in Seattle, Washington as recommended by the Public Buildings Reform Board (PBRB). We urge the Office of Management and Budget to rescind its decision to close the facility and subject the PBRB's recommendation to a more rigorous review. The PBRB's short-sighted decision was reached without consultation with any stakeholders, including the states, tribes, or agencies concerned or researchers and other members of the public.

NCH is a consortium that advocates on federal, state and local legislative and regulatory issues. The coalition includes more than 50 organizations representing historians, archivists, genealogists, researchers, teachers, students, documentary editors, preservationists, political scientists, and museum professionals. Our diverse membership has extensive experience with the use and operations of NARA facilities, yet we were not afforded the opportunity to provide decision makers with our informed comments.

Although NARA has no plans to close any facilities, consolidating regional operations could be an option in the future. But decisions about combining regional facilities should be made after NARA evaluates its operations and consults with stakeholders, rather than through this current process. The PBRB report is silent regarding whether 1) there were efforts to solicit public input and 2) NARA has approved closure of the Seattle facility because that will enhance its operations or be beneficial to users of the facility. The impact of this determination cannot be measured strictly in dollars and cents. Drastic changes to NARA's operations have long-term consequences for all users of the facility and for the ability of Americans to participate in democratic government.

In addition, the closure of the National Archives at Seattle will have a significantly adverse impact on researchers and citizens in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest states, as it is the primary access point for viewing thousands of original federal records (such as maps, photographs, documents, and government records) that are unavailable elsewhere. We support the Senators and Members of Congress from Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington who requested that this matter be reconsidered.

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We respectfully request that the Office of Management and Budget place a hold on the closure and sale of this property and reopen deliberations so that the full implications can be studied and sufficient time allowed for public comment.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Alan Kraut in black ink.

Alan Kraut, Ph.D
President

Handwritten signature of Lee White in blue ink.

Lee White
Executive Director