



February 19, 2020

Mr. Russell Vought  
Acting Director  
Office of Management and Budget

Re: Closure of Federal Archives and Records Center in Seattle, Washington

Dear Acting Director Vought,

On behalf of the American Library Association, I write to express our concern with the announced closure of the National Archives and Records Administration's Federal Archives and Records Center in Seattle, Washington, as proposed by the Public Buildings Reform Board on December 27, 2019<sup>1</sup> and announced by the National Archives on January 27, 2020.<sup>2</sup>

Americans deserve fair access to the documents of our history. The Seattle archives facility and staff provide public access to federal archival records, especially those of regional interest. Following the 2014 closure of the National Archives' facility in Anchorage, Alaska,<sup>3</sup> this closure will relocate records even farther away from the communities that use them the most.

The Public Buildings Reform Board justifies the closure of the Seattle facility by noting its \$2.5 million deferred maintenance backlog. While past Congresses failed to invest in adequate maintenance, closing the facility without a replacement in the region would place the burdens of this mistake on the public who use these records.

We echo the concerns of historians,<sup>4</sup> archivists,<sup>5</sup> and state<sup>6</sup> and Congressional leaders<sup>7</sup> about this decision. We urge you to work with Congress and the National Archives to preserve Americans' access to our nation's historical records by investing in sufficient physical facilities, staff, and digitization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gavin R. Baker". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Gavin R. Baker  
Deputy Director, Public Policy and Government Relations  
American Library Association

cc: Mr. David Ferriero, Archivist of the United States

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from the Public Buildings Reform Board to Russell Vought, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget (December 27, 2019), *available at* <https://www.pbrb.gov/assets/uploads/20191227%20High%20Value%20Assets%20Report%20as%20Required%20by%20FASTA.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, "Seattle Facility Approved for Closure" (January 27, 2020), *available at* <https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2020/nr20-37>.

<sup>3</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, "Statement by Archivist of the United States David S. Ferriero – Announces Closure/Consolidations of Three National Archives Facilities" (March 11, 2014), *available at* <https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2014/nr14-41.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from James Grossman, Executive Director, American Historical Association, to Russell Vought, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget, and the Public Buildings Reform Board (January 23, 2020), *available at* <https://www.historians.org/news-and-advocacy/aha-advocacy/letter-of-concern-about-the-proposed-closure-and-sale-of-the-nara-facility-in-seattle>.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from the Council of State Archivists and the Society of American Archivists to Russell Vought, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget (January 30, 2020), *available at* [http://files.archivists.org/news/Joint-Statement-on-NARA-Seattle%20Closure\\_013020.pdf](http://files.archivists.org/news/Joint-Statement-on-NARA-Seattle%20Closure_013020.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Kim Wyman, Secretary of State, Washington, to Washington's Congressional delegation (January 27, 2020), *available at* [https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/archives/letter\\_naraseattleclosure\\_012720.pdf](https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/archives/letter_naraseattleclosure_012720.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Letter from 16 bipartisan Members of Congress to Russell Vought, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget (January 24, 2020), *available at* <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6672233-NAtional-Archives-Senators-Letter-New.html>