



Secretary of State

Kim Wyman



Seattle's National Archives and Records Administration facility. From archives.gov.

Presentation by Secretary of State Kim Wyman Before the Washington State Heritage Caucus Wednesday, February 19, 2020

The following is the transcription of Secretary of State Kim Wyman's presentation to the Washington State Legislature's Heritage Caucus on the morning of February 19th:

As you have heard, the Public Buildings Reform Board (PBRB) has proposed selling the National Archives facility in Seattle.

This decision was made without public meetings or soliciting comments from stakeholder in the four Pacific Northwest states which are being impacted by the closure.

On January 15, 2020, the Washington State Archives was informed by NARA after the decision was made by the PBRB. The PBRB never contacted the Office of the Secretary of State or the Washington State Archives regarding the pending decision, nor was there an opportunity for the State Archives to comment on the proposed decision. To date, the four states have yet to hear from the PBRB.

The National Archives shared they have been underfunded for numerous years, do not have the funds for critical building repairs (\$30-\$90 Million) nor do they have the authority to direct the proposed revenue from the sale of Sandpoint.

The proposed closure of National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) facility in Seattle will have an adverse impact to the citizens of the four Pacific Northwest states, as well as increasing the cost of doing business for all Region X agencies headquartered in Seattle.

The NARA facility contains important federal historical archival records from Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. About 58,000 cubic feet of archival records to be precise.

Those impacted include, our Washington State Tribes who have expressed their concern that federal records documenting the Indian treaty rights, tribal reservations, salmon recovery and other issues will no longer be accessible to the tribes.

The Asian-American communities have also spoken out against records related to the Chinese Expulsions and the Japanese Internment Camps being moved out of the Pacific Northwest Region.

The Washington State Archives routinely refers researchers to the Seattle NARA facility, and, vice versa, they refer researchers to us.

These researchers include the news media, authors, attorneys, historians, genealogists, and many government agencies at all levels.

In the future, these researchers would need to travel about 1,000 miles south to Riverside, California to access Pacific NW federal archival records. Region X federal agencies, headquartered in Seattle, now send their active records to the Seattle NARA facility which is a short drive halfway across town.

In the future, active records used by Region X federal agencies will be shipped over 2,000 miles at great expense to a NARA records center in Kansas City.

It appears the relocation destinations for both active records and archives are still being discussed.

In 2014, the NARA Anchorage Alaska facility was closed and all records were moved to Seattle. The new proposed closure means Alaskan researchers would need to travel 3,600 miles to research archival records in Riverside, California.

Our citizens need our help to keep Pacific Northwest history accessible to our citizens. Secretary Wyman sent a letter to our Congressional delegation asking for their assistance in halting the sale and removal of the federal materials.

We are in the permitting and design phase for our new State Library-State Archives building in Tumwater. We are building on land owned by the Port of Olympia. We invite the National Archives (NARA) to consider co-locating next to our new facility. The cost of doing business is considerably less than doing business in Seattle. Our budget for our new facility is extremely lean and as such, we do not have the resources/space to absorb the extra 58,000 cu ft. There are potential solutions including: the profits from the old facility on Sandpoint Way could pay for a new facility or an annex to the LAB building in Olympia if funds were designated by the PBRB. PBRB alone will receive the proceeds for the sale of the Sandpoint facility.

I am open to other ideas that would keep our Pacific Northwest history in our region, and accessible to our citizens.