

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

The Honorable John Kennedy  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Financial Services and  
General Government  
133 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Coons  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Financial Services and  
General Government  
125 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Coons:

As you know, the decision has been made to close the Federal Records and Archive Center (FRC) located in Seattle, Washington. We write to ask the Subcommittee to address the failure of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to guarantee continued access to federal records that are vital to stakeholders, including Indian tribes and tribal organizations, throughout the Northwest.

The Seattle FRC's Textual Research and Public Access Research Rooms, open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, provide in-person access to records of importance on a broad range of current issues and topics including tribal membership, Forest Service timber sales, land claims and disputes, the navigability of federally-owned waters, ongoing scientific research, and much more—some of which is subject to litigation. From Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 to FY 2019, in-person use of the original records in the Textual Research Room has consistently increased. Despite the Federal furlough in FY19 that closed the facility, over 700 textual researchers examined 2,622 boxes of materials. In addition, 343 visitors used the Public Access Computers and examined microfilm. State agencies, tribes and tribal organizations, historians, researchers and students all rely on access to these records.

The proposed closure of the Seattle FRC and the proposed move of the archival records to the NARA facility in Riverside, California, and the records in storage to Kansas City, Missouri, elicits many questions, and would create a significant hardship for state agencies, Indian tribes, researchers, students, and other individuals in Alaska, Washington, Idaho, and Oregon who would have to travel farther and at greater expense to access these records. While NARA has attempted to digitize some of the archival records, they have abjectly failed to make any semblance of significant progress. Of those records that have been digitized, very few are accessible online and those that are online are difficult to find.

While we still have concerns about the process the Public Buildings Reform Board and the Office of Management and Budget took in recommending and approving the Seattle FRC's closure, our primary concern is ensuring continued access to these vital records and artifacts for our constituents. Therefore, we are asking the Subcommittee to exercise its oversight

capabilities by requiring NARA to find a way to protect our constituents' access to the records—through increased digitization and posting online in a prominent location, and to require the General Services Administration to exercise its leaseback authority to buy more time for a viable solution.

Sincerely,



Mike Crapo  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



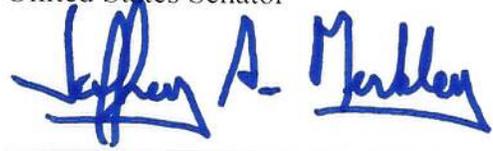
James E. Risch  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator