



Public Talking Points for Use by Wisconsin Humanities Supporters

*Scroll down for District specific impact in pages below

The Crisis

On April 3, WH received notice from the Acting Chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities that, effective April 2nd, all its grants were canceled in their entirety. These cuts include terminating Wisconsin Humanities' 5-year General Operating Grant and other program-specific awards. These grants were appropriated by Congress in the 2025 budget signed in March, just as every Congress has funded Wisconsin Humanities through the National Endowment for the Humanities for more than 50 years.

What are State Humanities Councils?

Our nation's 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils are nonpartisan 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations established in 1971 by Congress to make outstanding public humanities programming accessible to everyday Americans. What are the humanities? [LINK HERE](#)

Councils' primary source of funding comes through the National Endowment for the Humanities. Funds sent to the councils by NEH are locally controlled and used by councils to create locally-tailored programs and distribute grants to American institutions like historical societies, museums, heritage sites, and schools.

What do humanities councils do?

Since our organization's founding as an independent nonprofit in 1972, Wisconsin Humanities has worked in every corner of the state.

We have stayed responsive to the needs and aspirations of our constituents by building humanities programs for teachers and librarians, programs on the radio and in the town hall, and programs that humanize social media and public spaces. Last year, 220 grant-related events were funded, with more than 80,000 participants. Every WH grant dollar was matched 4:1 with community dollars.



Why does the Federal government fund humanities?

The rationale for establishing the NEH and funding humanities on a Federal level was explained in 1965 in its [founding legislation](#):

“An advanced civilization must not limit its efforts to science and technology alone, but must give full value and support to the other great branches of scholarly and cultural activity in order to achieve a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, and a better view of the future.

Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens. It must therefore foster and support a form of education, and access to the arts and the humanities, designed to make people of all backgrounds and wherever located masters of their technology and not its unthinking servants.”

Federal funding ensures that humanities and cultural programs don't just happen in rich or urban communities. Humanities councils reach every corner of their states and jurisdictions. Federal funding allows them to offer equal grants and programs to individuals and organizations in small town and rural areas.

Why do we need humanities councils?

NEH funding has been the backbone of Wisconsin Humanities since state councils were established by Congress in 1971 and supported by every Congress since. Humanities councils exemplify a functional and efficient public/private partnership. Funds distributed to the councils by NEH are locally controlled and used by councils in support of community-led programs and institutions like historical societies, museums, schools, and veteran services.

District 1:

- **Programs and Impact:**
 - WH grants delivered \$19,881 in federal funds, matched by \$26,636 locally in Rock and Walworth Counties.
 - Community-wide read of *The Dispossessed* connected students and seniors in Beloit to talk about utopia, social issues, and local change.
- **Story Highlight:**

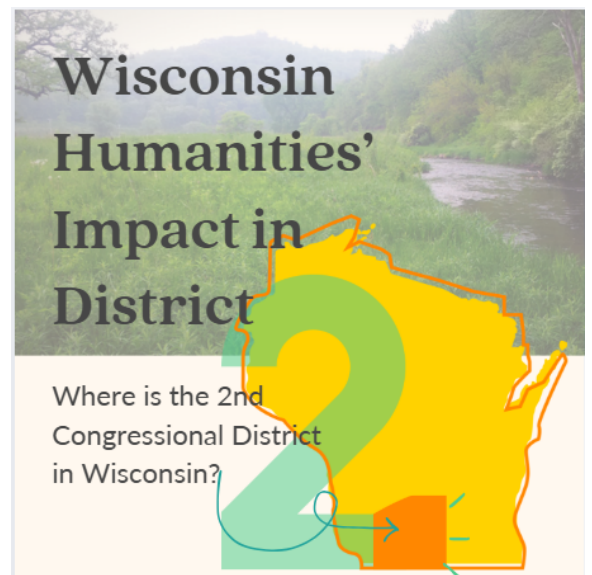




- *Love Wisconsin* shared Christina Schwab's journey as a Paralympic athlete and coach from UW-Whitewater's pioneering adaptive sports program. You can read more about Christina's story [here](#).
 - **Why It Matters:**
 - Builds intergenerational dialogue, celebrates accessibility in athletics, and supports youth civic engagement in rural and urban communities.
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District 2:

- **Programs and Impact:**
 - WH grants brought **\$55,828** to Dane County, locally matched with over \$560,000
 - Wisconsin Humanities funded a program where Ho-Chunk youth co-created trailsigns in McCarthy park—bringing Indigenous stories into public spaces.
- **Story Highlight:**
 - Rich Joseph, a local hops grower and homebrewer, now runs a brewery along the Sugar River—his story connects agriculture, entrepreneurship, and community pride. You can read more about Rich's story [here](#).
- **Why It Matters:**
 - Builds cultural bridges between Native and non-Native residents and supports local heritage tourism and business development.



District 3:

- **Programs and Impact:**
 - Wisconsin Humanities granted out **\$45,993**, matched with \$616,617 in Eau Claire, Portage, and Richland Counties.
 - Wisconsin Humanities used federal funds from the NEH to fund *Wisconsin's Shakespeare Festival* and reached new audiences with youth performances, talkbacks, and guides to make Shakespeare accessible in rural areas. You can read more about the WI Shakespeare Festival [here](#).



- **Story Highlight:**
 - After a traumatic brain injury, Jaidan Nugent was featured on *Love Wisconsin* which shared her story of how she thrived through baking and entrepreneurship. Her story is a testament to resilience and inclusive economic opportunity. You can read more about Jaidan’s story [here](#).
- **Why It Matters:**
 - Humanities investments uplift rural arts, literacy, and disability empowerment—reaching deep into small towns and underserved communities.



District 4:

- **[Programs and Impact:](#)**
 - WH grants brought **\$23,876**, matched by \$72,105 in Milwaukee County.
 - Teens in Milwaukee explored environmental justice and fashion through a WH-funded internship curriculum.
- **Story Highlight:**
 - *Love Wisconsin* featured Giovanni Gillespie of Speed Queen Bar-B-Q—Milwaukee’s iconic family restaurant celebrating African American culinary and legacy. You can read more about Giovanni’s story [here](#).
- **Why It Matters:**
 - Builds youth leadership and honors Black-owned businesses and cultural entrepreneurship.





District 5:

- **Programs and Impact:**
 - WH grants brought **\$19,400**, matched with \$92,848 in Washington and Waukesha Counties.
 - Major grant supported an exhibit on Ho-Chunk black ash basketry—showcasing art, history, and resilience to visitors from 30+ states.
- **Story Highlight:**
 - Corey Geiger, the “Dancing Dairyman,” turned farm stories into a book and public performances, celebrating agricultural heritage. You can read more about Corey “Dancing Dairyman” Geiger [here](#).
- **Why It Matters:**
 - Strengthens cultural preservation, education, and tourism to Indigenous and farming histories.



District 6:

- **Programs and Impact:**
 - WH grants brought **\$9,999**, matched with \$26,550 in Winnebago County.
 - In a WH funded initiative, Mariachi music events celebrated Latinx culture through free concerts and history exhibits in Oshkosh and Appleton.
- **Story Highlight:**
 - Sheboygan’s Dan Welsch went from a kid fishing off the piers to founding a premier fishing charter company—highlighting local pride and water traditions. You can read more about Dan’s fishing adventures [here](#).
- **Why It Matters:**
 - Lifts up cultural histories and musical traditions, fostering cultural understanding and tourism in the Fox Valley.





District 7:

- **Programs and Impact:**
 - WH granted **\$26,960**, matched with \$52,387 in Barron, Marathon, Polk, and Vilas Counties.
 - *Kiss Me Once*, a musical narrative, inspired writing workshops and exhibitions with veterans across northern Wisconsin.
- **Story Highlight:**
 - Lori Schneider, diagnosed with MS, became the first person with the disease to summit Mt. Everest—featured on *Love Wisconsin* as a symbol of strength and hope. You can read more about Lori's story [here](#).
- **Why It Matters:**
 - Connects veterans, rural residents, and storytellers to healing and empowerment through the humanities.



District 8:

- **Programs and Impact:**
 - WH brought **\$14,000**, matched by \$18,578 in Brown and Marinette Counties.
 - Peshtigo Historical Society's documentary revived the legacy of the 1871 fire with WH support—telling a forgotten Wisconsin story.
- **Story Highlight:**
 - Mario Gonzalez of Green Bay followed his childhood dream to become a communicator and advocate for community well-being through Wello. Mario's story was shared on *Love Wisconsin* and you can read more about him [here](#).
- **Why It Matters:**





- Resurrects untold histories and supports local health and wellness leadership through storytelling and education.