

press release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 8, 2009

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Humanities Washington Applauds Nomination of James Leach to NEH Chair *Rep. Norm Dicks heralds Leach's commitment to ensuring broad distribution of humanities programs throughout the country, including Washington State*

SEATTLE — Humanities Washington, an organization dedicated to providing cultural education programs across the state, in partnership with the The Federation of State Humanities Councils, has enthusiastically endorsed President Obama's decision to nominate James Leach, a former 15-term Congressman from Iowa, as the next chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

Calling the nomination an "important and timely" selection, Susannah Malarkey, chair of Humanities Washington's board of trustees, stated "Mr. Leach has demonstrated outstanding leadership in the humanities throughout his career and embraces the role the humanities play in helping citizens nationwide understand our history and how it relates to our current circumstances."

Rep. Norm Dicks (D-WA), Chairman of the House Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees funding for NEH, said that Leach will work with the state agencies to ensure there is broad distribution of humanities programs throughout the country.

"NEH-funded humanities programs in Washington State enable us to harness our collective history to inform current and future thinking," said Dicks. "From the Spokane School District project to raise awareness of Spokane's role in the free speech movement, to Copper Canyon Press' creation of an interactive Web site that profiles world-renowned poets, the NEH and Humanities Washington play an important role in preserving and nurturing Washington's historical and cultural richness."

Mr. Leach served as Chairman of the House Committee on Banking and Financial Services (1995-2001), a senior member of the House Committee on International Relations, and Chairman of the Committee's Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs (2001-2006). Since 2007, he has taught at Princeton University and served as the interim director of the Institute of Politics at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

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In 2004 Leach co-founded, along with Rep. David Price (D-NC), the bipartisan Congressional Humanities Caucus to increase awareness of the importance of the humanities in public life. He received the 2005 Sidney R. Yates Award for Distinguished Public Service to the Humanities from the National Humanities Alliance in recognition of his work as a champion for the humanities.

In a congressional environment that was often contentious and partisan, Mr. Leach gained an unshakable reputation for integrity, even-handedness, and an independent and thoughtful approach to issues. In choosing Leach to head the National Endowment for the Humanities, President Obama recognized that Leach was also a champion of the activities and endeavors that make human life meaningful.

An important component of the agency Leach will be heading are the 56 state humanities councils, including Humanities Washington, established to extend the reach of the NEH to communities across the United States. State humanities councils offer programs that support families and educators, provide resources for community institutions, and bring citizens together to collectively address issues of importance and encourage civic engagement.

ABOUT HUMANITIES WASHINGTON

Humanities Washington is a statewide organization dedicated to improving life for individuals and their communities through interdisciplinary cultural education programs that nurture creativity, promote dialogue and spark critical thinking. Humanities Washington's programs include Motherhead, a family literacy program; Inquiring Mind, a speakers' bureau featuring dynamic presenters on a broad array of humanities topics; an Exhibits program which brings Smithsonian exhibitions to small museums; and grants to support local humanities projects in Washington State. For more information on Humanities Washington visit <http://www.humanities.org>.

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