

Opening Statement of Dr. Colleen Shogan
Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee
September 21, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished Members of the Committee.

Good morning. My name is Dr. Colleen Shogan, and my nomination to serve as the Eleventh Archivist of the United States is indeed the honor of a lifetime. I am likewise humbled by the opportunity to serve as the first nominated woman in the role.

Before I continue, I would like to thank my husband Rob for being here today. He has consistently supported my career, and I know this will continue if I am confirmed as Archivist. My family, including my 89-year-old father watching today from western Pennsylvania and my brother watching from Texas, has been instrumental in my success.

I must admit, this committee room is quite familiar to me. Over fifteen years ago, I attended meetings here as a congressional staffer. I never imagined I would be sitting on this side of the dais for a confirmation hearing.

My passion for the American story started in the public high school I attended outside Pittsburgh, with engaging teachers who taught United States history and government. As a first-generation college student in my family, I was fortunate to receive a first-class education, which allowed me to explore the development and evolution of American ideas and institutions.

My reverence for democratic principles, ideals, and governance led me to a career that included positions in academia, federal government service, and nonprofit management. Following my service in the Senate, I spent over a decade directly supporting Congress as a senior leader at the Congressional Research Service and the Library of Congress. I also served as the Vice-Chair of the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, which commemorated the anniversary of the 19th amendment without partisanship.

These positions, including the one I hold today at the White House Historical Association, have instilled in me the tremendous value of nonpartisanship and access to trusted sources. I am confident that my years of experience in these unique roles have prepared me well to serve as the Archivist of the United States.

The National Archives and Records Administration, often known as NARA, preserves the building blocks of our nation's democracy. NARA does this by enabling access to the government records which tell our national story in the words and images of the people who made history.

This is critical for several reasons. First, it provides citizens with answers about family heritage, military service, and governmental decisions. Citizen engagement with Archives' materials online and in-person through our nationwide system of archival research rooms and Presidential libraries is a top priority for NARA.

The National Archives also provides researchers, historians, genealogists, educators, students, and other stakeholders with trusted information about our shared past. In my own research, I have benefited from examining NARA's records. As a political scientist, I strongly believe that we cannot understand our nation's present condition without a comprehensive understanding of the paths which brought us here. Along with our other federal cultural institutions, NARA secures the repository of knowledge that enables such understanding – for scholars and citizens alike.

Additionally, the National Archives provides vital records management services and guidance to all three branches of the government and is leading the government-wide transition to electronic recordkeeping.

Most importantly, NARA safeguards government records in public trust to enable citizens - such as veterans - to claim their rights to hold their government accountable and to participate in the civic process.

If confirmed, I will have many hills to climb in this position. I do not assume these challenges lightly. To succeed, we will need to find creative ways to become more efficient, to capitalize upon public-private partnerships, and to engage previously underserved communities in meaningful ways.

Of course, NARA must do this as technologies improve at a lightning speed. Government is not always considered nimble when it comes to innovation, but the National Archives can serve as a leader in its transition to a primarily digital future. This will require investing in the Archives talented workforce and making smart business decisions that will propel NARA forward.

In a private meditation, Abraham Lincoln likened the principles of the Declaration of Independence to the "apple of gold" – a phrase contained in the Book of Proverbs. Lincoln knew it was his task to move the nation toward a "more perfect" realization of these principles. As the 250th anniversary of our country approaches, that hard work continues. If confirmed, I look forward to sharing the treasured collection of the National Archives with all Americans.