

**House Higher Education Subcommittee
FY 2012-2013 Biennial Budget
Testimony from the Ohio Historical Society
Burt Logan, Executive Director and CEO
March 28, 2011**

Chairman Gardner and members of the Higher Education Subcommittee:

It is a pleasure to be with you today. I am Burt Logan, executive director and CEO of the Ohio Historical Society. On behalf of our Board of Trustees, our staff, and the thousands of organizations and individuals who preserve, protect, and promote the story of the land we call Ohio, I come this afternoon to pledge our fullest efforts to renew and strengthen the longstanding public-private relationship between the Ohio Historical Society and the State of Ohio that dates back more than 125 years.

Most people are well aware of the difficult financial times the Ohio Historical Society has faced in recent years. Instead of revisiting and recounting past reductions, I would like to highlight a few of our many success stories. Each of us can be proud of what the Ohio Historical Society has accomplished in a down economy and difficult budget environment. Despite sizable state funding cuts in the last budget, we did not close a single historic site or museum. Here are just a few of the things the Society has achieved during the past 15 months:

- Earned national re-accreditation from the American Association of Museums (AAM), for the first time including six of the museums and historical sites included in the OHS network. A seventh, the Hayes Presidential Center, has separately earned accreditation, which is the “Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval” in the museum world.
- Accelerated the process of securing dozens of local historic site managers to partner with the Society to operate most of the historic sites in our care.
- Launched a statewide Civil War 150 initiative that positions the Ohio Historical Society as a resource and clearinghouse for Ohioans, communities and history-related organizations at the local level to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Civil War. Through coordinated efforts online at www.ohiocivilwar150.org and with the assistance of a statewide advisory committee, OHS is helping Ohioans understand the impact of the Civil War on those who fought, those who were freed, and those who maintained the

home front. The Sesquicentennial will kick-off on April 10 with a brunch and muster re-enactment at the Statehouse, to which I invite each of you.

- Facilitated a statewide vote for the National Statuary Collection Study Committee to get public input about which Ohioan should replace former Gov. William Allen, with Thomas Edison emerging as the top vote-getter.

There are many other exciting things I would like to share with you regarding the activities and services we are providing across Ohio. You should have received a copy of the 2011 Citizens' Guide to the Ohio Historical Society. I hope you have a chance to read through this publication and to use it as a desktop reference. The Citizens' Guide, published with private dollars, provides a concise summary of the many ways the Society works to preserve, promote, and share Ohio history. We intend to update the Guide annually.

We value the unique relationship we have with the State of Ohio and appreciate all of your efforts to help position the Ohio Historical Society for success. A great example is the legislation to create an income tax check-off for OHS. We thank Rep. Gardner for sponsoring House Bill 104, and each member of the subcommittee for being a co-sponsor. We will use the revenue from the tax check-off to create a new, competitive, matching-grant pool to make available assistance to history-related organizations and projects across Ohio. As the state's leader in providing history services, we are committed to strengthening those groups in yours and every other district throughout the state that are hard at work promoting, protecting and preserving local and regional history.

As for the Society, we have approached the FY 2012-13 state budget proactively. After careful consideration by our senior staff and board of trustees, we crafted an innovative proposal that is summarized in your materials. We are grateful that the Office of Budget and Management accepted our proposal. The Governor's introduced budget may provide 7 percent less funding for OHS, but it is 100 percent of what we asked. The modest budget increases to Lines 501, 502 and 504 are still historically low, but stabilizing these funds, as this budget proposes, allows us to keep our momentum and to move ahead with several important initiatives. The reduction to Line

509 may seem draconian, but this is the line item where we have the most capacity to raise non-state funds for those activities.

The funding proposal we presented to the Kasich Administration started by grouping all of the functions the Society performs for the state, as outlined in the Ohio Revised Code, as such:

Category 1: public service functions fully funded by the State and performed by OHS

Category 2: public service functions performed by OHS and funded jointly by the State and OHS

Category 3: public service functions performed and funded by OHS

Category 1 functions are inherently more governmental in nature. These include our most publicly visible activities such as the operation of the State Archives, the State Historic Preservation Office, and the state's historic sites and museums. In virtually every other state, these functions are performed by a state agency or department. In addition, these functions are less likely to generate private funds. In the case of historic sites managed by local groups, any incremental revenue generated stays with the local operating group, not OHS. For these reasons, OHS proposed that the state be responsible for providing sufficient funds for these particular functions. Category 2 functions that we propose to fund with a mix of state GRF and private funds include many of the activities carried out by the Local History Office as well as the care and preservation of collections items. Category 3 functions are essentially publishing and educational outreach activities that we are more confident can be kept intact through non-state dollars.

Given the outcome of the FY 2010-11 budget for the Society, we could have found countless justifications to request double-digit increases to each line item. We may all agree that Ohio's history is well worth additional investment. We would certainly agree that such a request in this budget environment would not have been realistic or strategic. As it is, OHS has the opportunity to "own" this budget reduction. It is what we asked for, and we appreciate the Administration's willingness to listen and to implement the funding levels we requested.

As you might imagine, there has been a lot of anxiety about the upcoming biennial budget: Would OHS have to abandon our plans for the future? Would the recently implemented

local site management agreements be in jeopardy? Would more staffing and public access reductions be required? If the OHS budget continues to hold relatively stable, we will have the opportunity to maintain our momentum, and our service to Ohioans can continue to grow.

Looking ahead, please allow me to share with you a few things you can expect to see from the Ohio Historical Society over the next two years. We have some exciting changes underway at the Ohio Historical Center this year. We will open a new exhibit this weekend, featuring several controversial objects from our collections that visitors don't normally see. On July 1st, we will unveil a new look at the Center, including an expanded visitors' center, significant changes to the museum floor, a special exhibit called simply *The American Soldier*, a photographic documentary of our military service men and women from the Civil War through Iraq and Afghanistan, and a selection of Civil War battle flags. Later in the summer and fall we will open additional exhibits on archaeology and historic preservation.

We will be highly engaged during the next four years in commemorating the Civil War sesquicentennial. In the fall, the Society will introduce a new 4th grade Ohio history online textbook, marking our entry into electronic publishing. Entitled *Ohio As America*, this much-anticipated e-text will feature audio, video, in-classroom activities and collections images, in addition to the standard text. We are well positioned to do much more, especially if we are fortunate enough to have the OHS tax check-off enacted and if four of our archaeological sites – Fort Ancient, Newark Earthworks, Serpent Mound and Seip Mound – are added to the World Heritage List as we anticipate.

We will continue to strengthen our services and to personalize Ohio's history at every opportunity. We assist hundreds of thousands of Ohioans and out-of-state travelers through our services and by providing public access to our state's historic resources. We will continue to do the many things you've come to expect:

- Review economic development projects and facilitate historic preservation tax credits through the Ohio Historic Preservation Office
- Help communities recognize and celebrate their local heritage through the historical markers program, administered by the Local History Office

- Preserve and provide access to the state's collection of archaeology, natural history and history objects
- Provide enhanced access to the growing State Archives collection of state government records and other materials
- Serve teachers and students alike through teacher professional development, by providing curriculum resources, by coordinating programs such as National History Day in Ohio, and by facilitating experiential learning opportunities through field trips at historic sites
- Publish *Timeline* magazine, an Ohio favorite since 1984

In closing, I want to acknowledge the excellent work of the Ohio Legislative Commission on the Education and Preservation of State History, chaired by Senator Bill Seitz, which was created out of the FY 2010-11 budget bill. The Commission reviewed the work of the Ohio Historical Society, the Cincinnati Museum Center and the Western Reserve Historical Society. The Commission made 21 recommendations in its final report, published last September. A brief summary of that 150-page report is included here with my testimony for your information.

We are proud to continue this longstanding public-private partnership between the Ohio Historical Society and the State of Ohio. Everything we do in some way contributes to promoting Ohio's educational objectives, facilitating economic development and/or contributing to Ohio's quality of life. Ohio is fortunate to be home to such an abundance of history and historic places. It is our honor and privilege to be entrusted as the stewards of our state's revered and diverse history. Thank you for the opportunity to be with you this afternoon. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

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