May 19, 2014

Senator Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs
US House of Representatives
H-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs
US House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Fiscal Year 2015 Funding for the Fulbright Program

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

I write on behalf of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) to urge you to restore funding cuts proposed in the Administration’s budget request to the Fulbright program. If enacted, these cuts would have a harmful effect on what has been described as the flagship international exchange program of the United States. This program has supported scholarly exchange involving hundreds of anthropologists, and has greatly benefited the institutions and students that have hosted Fulbright scholars over the years. Founded in 1902, the AAA is the primary professional society of anthropologists in the US, with over 12,500 members.

We recognize the difficult education spending choices the Administration faces for FY 2015, but we are deeply concerned over the severe and disproportionate $30 million or 13% cut to the Fulbright program. The Fulbright program represents one of the government’s most important programs designed to strengthen our capabilities throughout the educational pipeline, from graduate education and advanced research, with emphasis on the less commonly-taught languages and world areas, such as China, Russia, India and the Muslim world. The program produces U.S. experts, prepare Americans for the global workplace, and generate knowledge on the foreign languages and business, economic, political, social, cultural and regional affairs of other countries and world areas.

Fulbright grants also provide incentives that stimulate additional investment from public and private sources, and the universities themselves. Significantly cutting or eliminating programs in this carefully designed “program pipeline” would seriously weaken our nation’s international education capacity, which has taken decades to build and would be impossible to easily recapture.

This federal-higher education partnership pays dividends that vastly outweigh the small 0.2% investment within the Department of Education’s budget. It has produced such renowned graduates as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, General John Abizaid, former Ambassador to Russia James Collins, advisor to six...
Secretaries of State Aaron David Miller, and NY Times Pulitzer prize-winning journalist Anthony Shadid.

As the FY 2015 funding bills make their way through Congress, I'd like to let you know that the AAA staff and leadership are willing to help you protect this vital program. If you have any questions, comments or concerns about this request, please feel free to contact Damon Dozier, AAA Director of Public Affairs at (703) 528-1902 or ddozier@aaanet.org.

Best regards,

Edward Liebow, PhD
Executive Director