

Adams, Markey, Hirono Seek Federal Preservation of Govt Records



From Rep. Adams Press <adams.press@mail2.housecommunications.gov>
To <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>
Reply-To <greg.nasif@mail.house.gov>
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Media Contact & Spokesperson: Greg Nasif, Press Secretary,
202-308-7055

Greg.Nasif@mail.house.gov



Rep. Adams, Sens. Markey and Hirono Introduce Legislation to Promote Preservation of Government and Historical Records

Helene Aftermath Shows Importance of Preservation of Official Documents

WASHINGTON, DC – Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D. (NC–12), a member of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, Senator Edward J. Markey (D–Mass.), a member of the Senate Health, Labor, Education, and Pensions Committee and Environment and Public Works Committee, and Senator Mazie Hirono (D–Hawaii) today introduced the Public Archives Resiliency Act, which would authorize grants to promote preservation, climate resilience, adaption, and continuity of vital government records and protect other records of historical or cultural significance. The legislation would provide funding for public archives, libraries, museums, institutions of higher education, or non–profits that protect these valuable records.

As the climate crisis worsens, the need to protect vital government records from damage and destruction is more urgent than ever. Government records are generated through birth, death, marriage, taxes, military service, education, immigration, property ownership and much more. Far too many institutions that manage these records are at risk of environmental damage and lack resources to protect themselves and their communities. When records are destroyed or become inaccessible, it can delay an individual’s ability to access key government benefits and services, as well as result in the loss of irreplaceable cultural artifacts.

“Especially in the wake of Hurricane Helene, which reminded us of the vulnerability of vital records of many North Carolinians to storm damage, we have a duty to ensure that archival records are protected from the elements,” **said Congresswoman Adams**. “I’m grateful to partner with Senator Markey in introducing legislation that would make new investments in public archives and the records of Tribes, museums, and libraries to bolster their resiliency. From preserving cultural memory to protecting legal and financial rights, the Public Archives Resiliency Act is a modest piece of legislation with wide–ranging, consequential benefits.”

“Archival records impact everyone’s lives, from birth and death certificates, to military service records, to personal property records, to the history of a community. Organized and preserved archives hold our government accountable and provide access to the knowledge and records necessary to secure our rights and benefits.” **said Senator Markey**. “The climate crisis demands that we protect public archives from environmental damage and preserve these invaluable glimpses into our past and present.”

“In the wake of last year’s Lahaina wildfires, eight of the Lahaina Restoration Foundation’s historic sites were burned down or critically damaged, leading to the loss of thousands of artifacts and records,” **said Senator Hirono**. “Public archives are essential to the preservation of our history and culture. The Public Archives Resiliency Act will help to better protect them from the effects of climate change, including natural disasters like wildfires or floods.”

“America’s archives have a unique role in underpinning legal and civic life and preserving cultural memory. Archives are part of the foundational infrastructure of our democracy. The growing frequency and severity of climate change–related disasters is having serious consequences on America’s archives and the archivists who steward these vital records. This legislation is critically important for providing support to address this increasingly urgent issue,” **said Eira Tansey, internationally recognized expert on climate change and archives, and author of *A Green New Deal for Archives***.

“The importance of creating resilient archival institutions cannot be understated. Especially related to government archives and records, individuals often rely on the creation and preservation of records – censuses, taxes, military service, education, legal proceedings, property ownership, among others – to protect their rights and property, to secure benefits, and to recover from disaster. We must do the work now to preserve these records and make sure they are accessible for the future,” **said Joy Banks, Executive Director, Council of State Archivists (CoSA)**.

“SAA is excited to see the Senator’s office taking action to support archives impacted by climate change. Providing such support to the profession will ensure that archivists have the resources they need to maintain their collections under changing conditions. We are grateful to Senator Markey’s office for their commitment to the archives and records profession,” **said Tomaro Taylor**,

President of the Society of American Archivists.

“Our historical records are essential to our understanding of America’s past. They provide facts for decision-makers and fuel for our imaginations, whether in the hands of scholars, educators, or family members. Our archival institutions deserve the necessary resources to continue to serve as cornerstones of our democracy. This bill protects these priceless documents as we continue to adapt to the challenges of climate change,” **said Brian Boyles, Executive Director of Mass Humanities.**

“This opportunity is vital in protecting our nation’s shared cultural heritage from the impacts of climate change. The Museum of Science is grateful to contribute to this critical effort, which holds significant meaning for the public and future generations. It is essential that museums, archives, and libraries have access to these funding opportunities to improve access to both physical and digital archival records. These records play a crucial role in informing the decisions we make today, which will impact and shape our future,” **said Tim Ritchie, President of the Museum of Science, Boston.**

“As a historic site in a seaside location, The House of the Seven Gables has already started to see impacts of climate change on our archival collections. Increased humidity promotes mold growth and decomposition, larger and more dangerous storms threaten our storage facilities, and the growing risk of flooding from sea level rise could cause catastrophic damage. Our organization has been entrusted with documents and records that tell the story of early Massachusetts and America. Support such as this bill would be transformational not just for us, but for many other archives, libraries, and museums across the nation” **said Dakota Russell, Executive Director of the House of the Seven Gables.**

“The importance of this bill cannot be overstated. This bill provides crucial support to libraries, archives and museums that care for historic and cultural materials endangered by the impacts of climate change. Infrastructure support would allow for critical improvements to aging HVAC systems, especially in Hawai‘i and other tropical climates where high temperature and humidity pose major challenges to maintaining a safe long term preservation environment for archival films. Digitization support would allow for the preservation, access and sharing of our cultural heritage documented on films and videos that are increasingly susceptible to loss from climate disasters,” **said Janel Quirante, Head Archivist, at ‘Ulu‘ulu: The Henry Ku‘ualoha Giugni Moving Image Archive of Hawai‘i.**

“Historic records and artifacts left by our kūpuna (ancestors) serve as foundational blueprints, offering invaluable guidance for addressing present-day challenges and shaping our future. The Public Archives Resiliency Act, which allocates additional funding to repositories, greatly strengthens the capacity of Hawai‘i’s archives to preserve and access essential historical records. This support is particularly critical as we confront the challenges of climate change, as recently underscored by the devastating wildfires on Maui in 2023,” **said Kai Kahele, Chairman of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs Board of Trustees.**

“The Public Archives Resiliency Act will provide essential support to Hawai‘i’s repositories dedicated to the preservation and accessibility of historic documents and artifacts. These institutions serve as vital stewards, empowering and educating the communities they support. OHA’s partnership with the Lahaina Restoration Foundation serves as a timely example of the importance of digitizing historic documents for the purpose of preserving Hawai‘i’s history and provides a foundational framework upon which we build our future,” **said Kale Hannahs, Research Systems Administrator at the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.**

“Archival records, by their very nature, deteriorate over time. An archivist’s job is to slow this process and preserve the vital information documenting our society. The changing climate adds undue stress, expense, and pressure to this role—national, state, and local governments must prioritize supporting the strengthening of archival resiliency as a preventative measure, or recovery of destroyed records will come at a much higher fiscal and social burden,” **said Edward Benoit III, Associate Director and Associate Professor, School of Information Studies, at Louisiana State University.**

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Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D. represents North Carolina's 12th Congressional District (Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, Cabarrus County) and serves on the House Committee on Agriculture and the House Committee on Education & the Workforce, where she serves as ranking member of the Workforce Protections Subcommittee.

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Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, NC-12
2436 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202-225-1510 Fax: 202-225-1512

Office of Congresswoman Alma Adams | 10815 David Taylor Dr., Suite 100 | Charlotte, NC 28262 US

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