



Hayden Names Tracy K. Smith Poet Laureate

Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden on Wednesday announced the appointment of Tracy K. Smith as the Library's 22nd poet laureate consultant in poetry, for 2017–2018. Smith will take up her duties in the fall, opening the Library's annual literary season with a reading of her work at the Coolidge Auditorium.

Smith, a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and a professor at Princeton University, succeeds Juan Felipe Herrera as poet laureate.

"It gives me great pleasure to appoint Tracy K. Smith, a poet of searching," Hayden said. "Her work travels the world and takes on its voices; brings history and memory to life; calls on the power of literature as well as science, religion and pop culture. With directness and deftness, she contends with the heavens or plumbs our inner depths – all to better understand what makes us most human."

Said Smith: "I am profoundly honored. As someone who has been sustained by poems and poets, I understand the powerful and necessary role poetry can play in sustaining a rich inner life and fostering a mindful, empathic and resourceful culture. I am eager to share the good news of poetry with readers and future readers across this marvelously diverse country."

Smith joins a long line of distinguished poets who have served in the position, including Herrera, Charles Wright, Natasha Trethewey, Philip Levine, W.S. Merwin, Kay Ryan, Charles Simic, Donald Hall, Ted Kooser, Louise Glück, Billy Collins, Stanley Kunitz, Robert Pinsky, Robert Hass and Rita Dove.

The new poet laureate is the author of three books of poetry, including "Life

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Shawn Miller

Carla Hayden testifies alongside Architect of the Capitol Stephen T. Ayers.

Hayden Testifies Before Senate Panel on Staffing, Budget

By Mark Hartsell

Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden last week told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee that she is committed to implementing a modernization program at the Library and sought approval for \$737.6 million in the fiscal 2018 budget request to help her carry out those plans.

The Library's budget request represents an increase of nearly \$53.6 million, or 7.8 percent, over total funding levels for the current fiscal year. Of that, \$22.6 million would fund new program increases for fiscal 2018 and \$21.3 million would fund mandatory pay and price-level increases.

The new program increases, Hayden said, advance three priorities: unique staffing requirements, collection stor-

age and preservation, and information-technology modernization.

"I am committed to a modernized Library that will make our extraordinary resources, collections and programs available online, enhancing opportunities for those who cannot come to see us in person," Hayden told the Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch on June 7.

Hayden was the sole member of the Library staff to testify at the hearing. Subcommittee members present were Chairman James Lankford (R-Okla.), Ranking Member Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) and Sens. John Kennedy (R-La.) and Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.).

"We are yet again in a situation where flat budgets are more than likely, and that may even be a best-case scenario," Lankford said in opening the proceedings. "We will do our part to make responsible

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on Mars,” winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry; “Duende,” winner of the 2006 James Laughlin Award and the 2008 Essence Literary Award; and “The Body’s Question,” winner of the Cave Canem Poetry Prize. Smith is also the author of a memoir, “Ordinary Light,” a finalist for the 2015 National Book Award in nonfiction.

For her poetry, Smith has received a Rona Jaffe Writers Award and a Whiting Award. In 2014, the Academy of American Poets awarded her with the Academy Fellowship, given to one poet each year to recognize distinguished poetic achievement. In 2015, she won the 16th annual Robert Creeley Award and in 2016 was awarded Columbia University’s Medal for Excellence.

In the Pulitzer Prize citation for “Life on Mars,” judges lauded its “bold, skillful poems, taking readers into the universe and moving them to an authentic mix of joy and pain.” Toi Derricotte, poet and Academy of American Poets chancellor, said “the surfaces of a Tracy K. Smith poem are beautiful and serene, but underneath, there is always a sense of an unknown vastness. Her poems take

the risk of inviting us to imagine, as the poet does, what it is to travel in another person’s shoes.”

Born in Falmouth, Massachusetts, in 1972 and raised in Fairfield, California, Smith earned a B.A. in English and



Shawn Miller

Tracy K. Smith earned a Pulitzer Prize for her 2012 volume, “Life on Mars.”

American literature and Afro-American studies from Harvard University and an M.F.A. in creative writing from Columbia University. From 1997 to 1999, she was a Stegner Fellow in poetry at Stanford University.

Smith has taught at Medgar Evers College of the City University of New York, at the University of Pittsburgh and at Columbia University. She is currently the Roger S. Berlind ’52 professor in the

humanities and director of the creative-writing program at Princeton University.

The Library of Congress Poetry and Literature Center is the home of the poet laureate consultant in poetry, a position that has existed since 1937, when Archer M. Huntington endowed the chair of poetry at the Library.

Since then, many of the nation’s most eminent poets have served as consultant in poetry to the Library and, after the passage of Public Law 99-194 (Dec. 20, 1985), as poet laureate consultant in poetry – a position which the law states “is equivalent to that of Poet Laureate of the United States.”

During his or her term, the poet laureate seeks to raise the national consciousness to a greater appreciation

of the reading and writing of poetry. The Library keeps to a minimum the specific duties required of the laureate, who opens the literary season in the fall and closes it in the spring. In recent years, laureates have initiated poetry projects that broaden the audiences for poetry.

More information about the poet laureate and the Poetry and Literature Center is available at loc.gov/poetry/. ♦

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Library collections continues to be a “severe need,” she said. Hayden noted in her written testimony that storage module 5 is on target for completion this calendar year and that the Architect of the Capitol is requesting \$45 million in its fiscal 2018

budget to build a double preservation storage module 6, needed to keep up with the volume and preservation of the physical collections.

“In closing, modernized IT, strengthened infrastructure and funding for staff with unique skills and expertise are

all critical elements in positioning the Library for the future,” Hayden said. “With your support, our service to the Congress and the American people promises to be the best it’s ever been, as we reach millions of new users in the years to come.” ♦