

P R E S E R V A T I O N

*Action*

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President  
Preservation Action

U.S Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

Department of Interior Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations for the National Park Service

Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Udall and Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of Preservation Action's more than 3,000 members and supporters, I appreciate the opportunity to present written testimony on the Department of Interior's FY 2020 for the National Park Service and its historic preservation programs. Founded in 1974, Preservation Action is a 501(c)4 nonprofit organization created to serve as the national grassroots advocacy organization for historic preservation. We represent an active and engaged grassroots constituency from across the country, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide their perspective.

The US Congress listened to the American people in 1966 when it enacted the National Historic Preservation Act. Today, the federal legislation and programs created through it serve as the backbone for the historic preservation industry. For over 50 years, the NHPA and the historic preservation field has demonstrated a proven track record of saving places Americans value, revitalizing communities, reusing infrastructure, telling American history for the public benefit of all. Continued funding to the National Park Service and the programs it executes is vitally important for America's past to help shape our future.

Preservation Action's mission is to make historic preservation a national priority. For 45 years we've advocated for sound preservation policy, including two of the most important tools for historic preservation- the Historic Preservation Fund and the Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (HTC).

**National Park Service: Historic Preservation Fund**

The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) is the principal source of funding to implement the nation's historic preservation programs. Since 1976 the HPF has helped to recognize, save, revitalize and protect America's historic resources. Preservation Action is extraordinarily grateful for the strong support Congress and especially this Committee, have shown for the HPF in recent years, including FY 2019's \$102.66 million, the highest level of HPF funding in history. The HPF provides funding to states and tribes to carry out their federally mandated duties and supports critically important competitive grant programs that empowers states and local communities to preserve places that help to tell a more complete American story.

Preservation Action urges this subcommittee to fund the Historic Preservation Fund in FY20's Department of Interior budget at the following level:

- **\$60 million for State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs)** for heritage preservation and protection programs that create jobs, economic development, and community revitalization. In partnership with the federal government, SHPOs carry out the primary functions of the National Historic Preservation Act including –finding and documenting America’s historic places, making nominations to the National Register, providing assistance on rehabilitation tax credit projects, reviewing impacts of federal projects, working with local governments, and conducting preservation education and planning. Additionally, states are required to match at least 40% of the money they receive from the HPF.
- **\$20 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs)**. THPOs are designated by federally recognized tribal governments that have entered into an agreement with the Department of the Interior to assume the federal compliance role of the SHPO on their respective Tribal lands. Tribal historic preservation plans are based on traditional knowledge and cultural values, and may involve projects to improve Indian schools, roads, health clinics and housing. Funding levels have not kept pace with the growing number of Indian Tribes with THPO programs, resulting in a lower average grants per tribe.
- **\$5 million for competitive grants for SHPOs and THPOs to invest in geographic information systems-based mapping of historic resources** (New program). 21st century digital maps would allow project planners to know where cultural resources have already been located and where they are likely to be identified. It would encourage early participation in project planning, enabling SHPOs and THPOs to work with project sponsors to plan, design, and develop projects that avoid harm to historic resources, lessen conflict, and expedite project delivery.
- **\$30 million for Civil Rights Initiative Competitive Grants**. A competitive grant program to preserve the sites and stories of Civil Rights in America. \$20 million of these funds would have to be used to preserve the sites and stories of the African American Civil Rights movement.
- **\$15 million for Save America’s Treasures Program**. Save America's Treasures grants program help preserve nationally significant historic properties and collections that convey our nation's rich heritage to future generations of Americans
- **\$10 million for Historically Black Colleges and Universities**. Funding would provide grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to preserve and repair historic buildings on the campuses of HBCUs.
- **\$7.5 million for Historic Revitalization Subgrant Program**. The purpose of the program is to rehabilitate and preserve historic resources, while fostering economic development of rural communities.
- **\$1 million for the Under-Represented Communities Grant Program**. These competitive grants support the survey and nomination of properties to the National Register of Historic Places and as National Historic Landmarks associated with communities currently under-represented.

**Total Historic Preservation Fund Request: FY 2020 \$148.5 million**

#### **Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit**

The Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (HTC), administered by SHPOs and the NPS, is the most significant federal investment in historic preservation. Since its creation more than 35 years ago, the HTC has been a catalyst for development with the rehabilitation of more than 44,000 buildings across the nation. Since

inception, the HTC has created over 2.5 million jobs and leveraged over \$144 billion in private investment. In addition to revitalizing communities and spurring economic growth, the HTC returns more to the Treasury than it costs. In fact, Treasury receives \$1.25 in tax revenue for every dollar invested. The HTC has helped to rehabilitate historic structures and revitalize communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S Virgin Islands. From helping to rehabilitate the Brown and Hawkins building in Seward, AK, the oldest store in Alaska, to the Mill No. 1 project in Baltimore, Maryland, the Historic Tax Credit is helping communities rebound and recapture their economic vitality as well as provide creative uses for old buildings and stimulate job growth.

In 2017, tax reform legislation preserved the 20% HTC, but changed it so that it is spread over five years at 4 percent per year. While we are incredibly grateful the HTC was retained, the changes made decreased the overall value of the tax credit. **Preservation Action and its national members urge Congress to protect the Historic Tax Credit, look for opportunities to improve and enhance the program, and continue to support the HTC by sufficiently funding SHPOs and the NPS who administer the program.**

### **Preservation Partnership Program: National Heritage Areas**

We'd also like to express our support for the Preservation Partnership Program which supports National Heritage Areas nationwide. Designated by Congress, National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are community-driven sites that weave cultural, natural, and historic resources together to tell nationally significant stories. NHAs rely on public-private funding where every federal dollar allocated is matched with an average of \$5.50 in public and private funds. Preservation Action greatly appreciates Congress and this Committee's continued support of NHAs, especially considering the program was proposed for significant cuts or elimination the last few years.

We'd also like to thank Congress and this committee for their passage of S.47, John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act. This bill included several important pieces of legislation such permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and authorization of the HBCU preservation program. Additionally, S.47 established 6 new National Heritage Areas.

While we appreciate the importance shown by recognizing these 6 new NHAs, funding has not kept pace. Since 2004 the number of NHAs have doubled while funding for the program has only increased by 33%.

To bring funding in line with the increased number of NHAs, Preservation Action requests, in accordance with the National Alliance of National Heritage Areas, **\$32 million for National Heritage Areas through the Preservation Partnership Program** in the FY20 Department of Interior's budget.

### **Conclusion**

Preservation Action appreciates the opportunity to provide our views on the FY20 Department of Interior budget. We work closely with a broad cross-section of preservation professionals from the state and local level and are pleased to be able to add their perspective as the Committee considers funding levels.

Preservation Action continues to value the dedicated work of National Park Service employees, the partnership of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as well as the instrumental work of SHPOs and THPOs in preserving America's cultural heritage.

Thank you for valuing the input of the preservation community as you consider the FY20 Department of Interior budget. We look forward to working with the committee and are happy to answer any questions you may have.

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