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April 02, 2019

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment and  
Related Agencies  
2256 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Joyce  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment and  
Related Agencies  
1124 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

We are writing to request that you support economic development, job creation, and our national heritage by appropriating up to \$141 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 funding for the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF). Of this total, we would request that \$60 million support State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), \$20 million support Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs), and \$5 million fund a competitive grant program for State or Tribal Historic Preservation Offices to invest in geographic information systems-based mapping of historic resources.

In addition, this total funding request should include \$7.5 million to fund the Save America's Treasures grant program, \$10 million to be utilized for competitive grants for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, \$1 million to go toward a competitive grant program to survey and document historic resources, and \$7.5 million to be allocated for the Historic Revitalization Subgrant Program to preserve historic resources in rural communities. We also request that up to \$30 million be provided for grants to preserve the sites and stories of efforts to advance civil rights in underrepresented communities, with the expectation that \$20 million of that total would go toward preserving the sites and stories of the African American Civil Rights movement.

SHPOs and THPOs tie our nation's historic preservation programs together. SHPOs carry out the National Historic Preservation Act, which provides citizens the tools they need to revitalize, rehabilitate, and protect American heritage. Annually, SHPOs also review more than 100,000 federal undertakings for their impact on historic resources and survey more than 16.5 million acres for cultural resources.

THPOs carry out many of the same functions as SHPOs for tribal governments. Just as the SHPOs review federal undertakings on state lands, the THPOs review federal undertakings on tribal government lands. Collectively, they exercise responsibilities over a land base exceeding 50 million acres in 30 states, and the HPF is the sole source of dedicated federal funding for THPOs. More

tribes establish THPO programs each year, representing an exercise of tribal sovereignty, but funding has not kept pace with this growing number. There were only 12 THPOs when they first received funding in 1996 and today, there are nearly 200 THPOs. As a result, in 2018, 179 tribes received an average of \$64,000, which was nearly \$20,000 each less than when the program first started. Our recommended \$20 million in FY2020 for the THPO line item would provide the nearly 200 THPOs an average of \$100,000 to run their programs, which is still meager but would start to close the critical mission gap.

There are two cornerstones of this work. First, reconnecting Native peoples to their cultural heritage, traditions, and places has the power to help heal deep generational wounds. Revitalizing traditions, languages, and practices serves to rebuild critical individual self-worth and community foundations. To continue this work in Indian country, it is essential that THPO programs receive increased funding to meet the increasing need.

Second, funding THPOs and staff creates jobs, generates economic development, and spurs community revitalization. It also facilitates environmental and historic review processes, including for infrastructure and energy permitting. Agencies are required to conduct government-to-government consultation on all actions they take, which means working with tribes to identify potentially affected resources and properties and taking mitigation measures. When agencies and project applicants call, someone must be there to pick up the phone and do the work.

Funding these historic preservation programs is vital to ensuring that the unvarnished story of America is told. It is an investment in towns and cities throughout the country, helping to improve the economy of these communities by boosting tourism through their historic sites and by leveraging public and private investment in restoring historic buildings. This funding is both an economic and historical imperative that creates construction jobs and protects historic resources that might otherwise be lost forever.

We greatly appreciate the strong support Congress has shown for the preservation of our nation's heritage. We look forward to working with you throughout the appropriations process and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Valerie J. Grussing, PhD  
Executive Director



Russ Carnahan  
President, Preservation Action