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United States Senate Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

Department of Interior Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations for the National Park Service

Chairman Merkley, Ranking Member Murkowski and Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of Preservation Action's thousands of members and supporters, representing nearly every state, I appreciate the opportunity to present written testimony on the Department of Interior's FY 2023 Appropriations for the National Park Service and its historic preservation programs. My name is Russ Carnahan and I'm the President of Preservation Action. 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.

On behalf of members and supporters across the country, I'd like to thank the subcommittee for their strong support of historic preservation programs and priorities in the past several Interior Appropriations bills, and especially for the FY22 Interior Appropriations bill, which funded the Historic Preservation Fund at \$173.3 million. This marked the seventh consecutive year of record funding for the program and for the first-time exceeded the program's decades old, \$150 million authorized level. Thanks to your support, programs that have a proven track record of saving places American's value, revitalizing communities, combating climate change by reusing infrastructure, and helping tell the story of historically marginalized and underrepresented groups; continue to benefit all Americans.

Preservation Action's mission is to make historic preservation a national priority. For 48 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. HPF funding is critical to State Historic Preservation Offices and Tribal Historic Preservation offices (SHPO/THPOs) to ensure they have the staffing capacity needed to review infrastructure and green energy projects as per Congressional directive under the National Historic Preservation Act. HPF funding also supports critically important competitive grant programs. We especially appreciate this committee's

continued support of programs like the African American Civil Rights Grant Program, the History of Equal Rights grant program, the Underrepresented Communities Grant Program, and others that are helping to tell a more diverse and inclusive American story.

Preservation Action is extraordinarily grateful for the strong support Congress, and especially this Committee, have shown for the HPF in recent years, but more is needed, especially as SHPOs and THPOs are expected to face increased workloads as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is implemented.

Preservation Action recommends this subcommittee to continue their strong support of historic preservation by appropriating **\$200 million in funding for the Historic Preservation Fund in FY23's Department of Interior budget**. Including funding at the following levels:

- **\$65 million for State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs)** for heritage preservation and protection programs that create jobs, economic development, and community revitalization. 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.
- **\$35 million for Save America's Treasures Program.** The Save America's Treasures grants program helps preserve nationally significant historic properties and collections that convey our nation's rich heritage to future generations of Americans.
- **\$34 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs).** THPOs are designated by federally recognized tribal governments and 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. THPOs have been chronically underfunded. Funding levels have not kept pace with the growing number of Indian Tribes with THPO programs, resulting in a lower average grants per tribe.
- **\$24 million for the African American Civil Rights Initiative Competitive Grants.** A competitive grant program to preserve the sites and stories of the African American struggle to gain equal rights in America.
- **\$12 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.
- **\$12 million for the Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Subgrants.** Supports the rehabilitation of historic properties and fosters economic development of rural communities through subgrants.

- **\$10 million for the Semiquincentennial Grants.** This competitive grant program preserves publicly owned historical sites commemorating the upcoming 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States.
- **\$5 million for the History of Equal Rights Grant Program.** A competitive grant program to preserve the sites and stories related to the struggle of all people to achieve equal rights in America.
- **\$3 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 FY 2023 Historic Preservation Fund Request: \$200 million**

Preservation Action also supports the bipartisan **Historic Preservation Enhancement Act** (H.R. 6589) which would fully fund and permanently authorize the Historic Preservation Fund at \$300 million. The HPF's authorization has not been increased since the program's inception in 1976 and the program's current authorization is set to expire in 2023. This bill would provide much needed certainty to the states, tribes, and local communities that rely on this federal funding to carry out their critical preservation work.

#### **National Park Service: Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit**

The Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (HTC), administered by SHPOs, THPOs and the National Park Service, is the most significant federal investment in historic preservation. The HTC has been a catalyst for development, rehabilitating of more than 46,000 historic buildings across the nation and leveraging over \$181 billion in private investment. Since inception, the HTC has created more than 3 million jobs and produced over 178,300 affordable housing units. In addition to revitalizing communities and spurring economic growth, the HTC returns more to the Treasury than the cost of the program. 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. Preservation Action also supports the bipartisan **Historic Tax Credit Growth and Opportunity Act** (S. 2266, H.R. 2294), which would increase the value of the HTC, improve access to the credit, and make the credit more appealing for smaller projects.

**Preservation Action urges the Committee to continue to support the Historic Tax Credit by sufficiently funding SHPOs, THPOs and the National Park Service who administer the program.**

#### **National Park Service: 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.

While we appreciate Congress's support of NHAs, funding has not kept pace with the need and popularity of the program. Since 2004 the number of NHAs have more than doubled while funding for the program has only increased by 33%. To bring funding in line with the increased number of NHAs, Preservation Action recommends, in accordance with the National Alliance of National Heritage Areas, **\$32 million for National Heritage Areas through the Preservation Partnership Program** in the FY22 Department of Interior's budget. Preservation Action also supports the bipartisan **National Heritage Area Act of 2021** (H.R. 1316) which establishes standardized criteria of NHAs and ensures long term sustainability.

#### **Independent Agency: Advisory Council on Historic Preservation**

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) is an independent federal agency that promotes the preservation, enhancement, and sustainable use of the nation's diverse historic resources, and advises the President and Congress on national historic preservation policy. We appreciate the continued support of this important agency. Preservation Action recommends the Committee support **\$10.5 million for the ACHP in the FY 2023 Interior Appropriations Bill**. An increase in funding will enhance the critical functions of the agency in ensuring the nation's historic and cultural resources are protected, while advancing tribal consultation, and finding efficiencies to deliver timely federal review of major infrastructure projects.

#### **Conclusion**

Preservation Action appreciates the opportunity to provide our views on the FY23 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.

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 FY23 Department of Interior budget and your past support of vital historic preservation programs. We look forward to working with the committee and are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Russ Carnahan  
President  
Preservation Action