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

Department of Interior Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations for the National Park Service

Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Pingree and Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of Preservation Action's thousands of members and supporters - representing nearly every state - we appreciate the opportunity to present written testimony on the Department of Interior's FY 2026 Appropriations for the National Park Service, its historic preservation programs, and related independent agencies. Specifically, we recommend the Committee support the following funding levels:

- National Park Service: Historic Preservation Fund → \$225 million
- National Park Service: Cultural Programs → \$46 million
 - African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program → \$3 million
- National Park Service: Heritage Partnership Program → \$34 million
- Independent Agencies: Advisory Council on Historic Preservation → \$10.5 million
- Independent Agencies: National Endowments for the Arts and for the Humanities → \$209 million

Founded in 1974, Preservation Action is a 501(c)4 nonprofit 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 this testimony reflects their priorities.

For over 50 years we've advocated for sound preservation policy, including two of the most important federal tools for historic preservation: the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) and the Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (HTC). All Americans benefit from these programs that have a proven track record of saving places Americans value, revitalizing communities, increasing economic development, promoting heritage tourism, and creating jobs.

In the most recent Continuing Resolution, the HPF was funded at \$168.9 million, a nearly \$20 million cut below Fiscal Year 2024 enacted levels. Additionally, in spite of the subcommittee's support for a one-year reauthorization of the HPF in previous drafts, the HPF's authorization was allowed to lapse last year. While we appreciate the continued support the subcommittee has shown, we are deeply concerned that recent funding cuts, drastic staff reductions at the National Park Service, federal funding freezes, contract cancellations, and ongoing uncertainty, is undermining the ability for critical preservation work to be carried out. As we approach America's 250th celebration in 2026, we urge you to support robust funding for the programs that help preserve our shared heritage.

National Park Service: Historic Preservation Fund (HPF)

The 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 ensure State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs/THPOs), who administer federal historic preservation programs, have the staffing capacity needed for the efficient review of infrastructure, energy, and other federal projects, per requirements under the National Historic Preservation Act. In FY 2024 SHPOs reviewed and consulted on 108,200 Federal undertakings, provided 91,600 National Register eligibility opinions and surveyed over 4.5 million acres for cultural resources.

HPF's competitive grant programs help to preserve, document, and exhibit our shared history. Programs like the Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grant program fosters economic development in rural communities. In 2022, the Idaho Heritage Trust was awarded a \$750,000 Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grant to restore nine historic theaters in communities across Idaho. As we prepare to commemorate America's 250th birthday, the Semiquincentennial Grant Program is helping to preserve historic sites associated with America's founding. In 2022, a Semiquincentennial grant supported the rehabilitation of the Colburn House in Pittston, Maine, where Major Colburn worked with local Indigenous leaders and colonists to map a water trail route for Benedict Arnold's campaign to seize Quebec in 1775 during the American Revolution.

Preservation Action appreciates the support this Committee has shown for the HPF, but more is needed. Cuts to the HPF undermine preservation efforts and the economic development these programs produce.

- **Preservation Action recommends this subcommittee support historic preservation by appropriating \$225 million in funding for the Historic Preservation Fund in FY26's Department of Interior budget, including funding at the following levels:**
 - **\$70 million for State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs).** SHPOs carry out the primary functions of the National Historic Preservation Act: finding and documenting America's historic places, nominating places to the National Register, aiding rehabilitation tax credit projects, and reviewing impacts of federal projects. To maximize efficiency, SHPOs need reliable and adequate funding.
 - **\$34 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs).** THPOs assume the federal compliance role of the SHPO on Tribal lands, grounded in sovereignty, traditional knowledge, and cultural values. THPOs are chronically underfunded. Funding levels have not kept pace with the growing number of Indian Tribes with THPO programs.
 - **\$121 million for seven existing competitive grant programs.** Together, these grant programs provide vital funds to help preserve the places that collectively celebrate our nation's rich history. There is incredible demand for these grants, and robust funding is needed to rehabilitate our shared historic places.

Total FY 2026 Historic Preservation Fund Request: \$225 million

Additionally, we appreciate the subcommittee's inclusion of a one-year authorization for the HPF as part of the FY25 Appropriations bill. However, this authorization was not included in the recently passed Continuing Resolution and the program is not currently authorized.

- **Preservation Action encourages inclusion of language to reauthorize the Historic Preservation Fund in the FY26 Department of Interior Budget.** We also support a

much-needed longer term HPF authorization to provide certainty to the states, tribes, and local communities that rely on this funding to carry out their vital preservation work.

National Park Service: Cultural Programs

The National Park Service's Cultural Programs supports much of the federal historic preservation program. This includes managing the National Register of Historic Places, and administering the Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (HTC), among other important activities and programs. The HTC supports historic rehabilitation projects across the country, like the rehabilitation of the Avery Building in Boise, ID in 2023, which transformed the building from vacant and neglected into a boutique hotel and an award winning restaurant. The HTC continues to be a catalyst for development and job creation, and is responsible for:

- Rehabilitating more than 50,000 historic buildings in all 50 states.
- Leveraging over \$235 billion in private investment.
- Creating more than 3.2 million jobs since its inception.
- Producing over 200,000 affordable housing units.
- Returning more to the Treasury than the cost of the program.

The HTC, along with other key preservation programs, depends on the capacity of SHPOs, THPOs, and the NPS staff. Recent layoffs at the NPS raise serious concerns about delays in project reviews and certifications, threatening the timely completion of rehabilitation projects and the economic development and job creation they generate. As Congress debates tax reform, Preservation Action urges lawmakers to include long-overdue improvements to the HTC that will enhance its value, expand access, and make the credit more attractive for smaller-scale projects. Additionally, Preservation Action strongly supports robust funding for Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs at the Department of Labor to ensure a skilled workforce is available to carry out these critical rehabilitation efforts.

- Preservation Action urges the Committee to **support the HTC and other important preservation programs that the National Park Service carries out by funding Cultural Programs at \$46 million**

National Park Service: African-American Burial Grounds Preservation Program

Within our Cultural Programs request, we specifically want to highlight the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program which was established by Congress in 2023 with strong bipartisan support. This program will identify, document, and preserve these historic and sacred burial sites whose protection and documentation has often been forgotten or neglected.

- Preservation Action supports **\$3 million in funding for the recently authorized, African-American Burial Grounds Preservation Program.**

National Park Service: Heritage Partnership Program

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.

- We express our support for **\$34 million for the Heritage Partnership Program**, which supports National Heritage Areas nationwide. This funding level keeps individual NHAs at their existing funding levels while providing funding for newly authorized NHAs.

Independent Agencies: Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) is an independent federal agency that promotes the preservation and enhancement of the nation's historic resources, and advises the President and Congress on national historic preservation policy.

- Preservation Action recommends the Committee support **\$10.5 million for the ACHP**. This will ensure the nation's historic and cultural resources are protected, advance tribal consultation, and deliver timely federal review of major infrastructure projects.

Independent Agencies: National Endowments for the Arts and for the Humanities

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) are independent federal agencies that support museums, archives, theaters, and funding critical to communities around the country.

- Preservation Action recommends the Committee support **\$209 million for the NEA and NEH**. Both agencies play a huge role in supporting cultural infrastructure and directly bolster historic preservation programming in communities nationwide.

Conclusion

Preservation Action appreciates the opportunity to provide our views on the FY26 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 add their perspective through our testimony. We value the dedicated work of National Park Service employees, partnership with the ACHP, NEA, and NEH, and the instrumental work of SHPOs and THPOs in preserving our shared heritage.

Thank you for valuing the input of the preservation community as you consider the FY26 funding levels and your past support of vital historic preservation programs. We look forward to working with the committee and are happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Russ Carnahan
President, Preservation Action