



Russ Carnahan
President, Preservation Action

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

Department of Interior Fiscal Year 2027 Appropriations for the National Park Service

Chair Murkowski, Ranking Member Merkley 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 2027 Appropriations for the National Park Service (NPS), its historic preservation programs, and related independent agencies. Specifically, we recommend the Committee support the following funding levels:

- National Park Service: Historic Preservation Fund → \$250 million
- National Park Service: Cultural Programs → \$46 million
 - African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program → \$3 million
- National Park Service: Heritage Partnership Program → \$33.5 million
- Independent Agencies: Advisory Council on Historic Preservation → \$8.585 million
- Independent Agencies: National Endowments for the Arts and for the Humanities → \$213 million

Since 1974, Preservation Action has 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). This year marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the 50th anniversaries of both the HPF and HTC. As we commemorate these important milestones, we urge the subcommittee to invest in the programs that help to preserve our nation's shared history. 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 FY26 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, the HPF was funded at \$181.059 million, a \$12 million increase above FY25 enacted levels. The bill also included a one year authorization of HPF. We greatly appreciate the Subcommittee's continued, strong support for historic preservation.

Unfortunately, we remain deeply concerned that drastic staff reductions at the NPS, contract cancellations, long delays in distribution of congressionally approved funding, and ongoing uncertainty is undermining the ability for critical preservation work to be carried out. Significant delays in the distribution of FY 2025 funding for State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (S/THPOs) caused months of planning uncertainty, postponed projects and grant disbursements, disrupted local preservation programs, and resulted in layoffs of professional staff.

While we were pleased to see the release of an FY26 Notice of Funding Opportunity for SHPOs and THPOs, we remain concerned over the disbursement of congressionally approved HPF

competitive grant funding. Unfortunately, FY25 (and FY26) funding for all the HPF's competitive grant programs have yet to be distributed. This includes funding for the Save America's Treasures grant program, African American Civil Rights grants, Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grants, Historically Black Colleges and Universities preservation grants, Semiquincentennial grants, among others. Together, these grant programs are helping to preserve the places that help tell our nation's story.

We ask the committee to facilitate the urgent release of FY25 and FY26 HPF grant funds and ensure the timely release of future congressionally appropriated funds.

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. As we commemorate America's 250th anniversary in 2026, we urge you to support a historic \$250 million investment in the HPF to help preserve our shared heritage.

HPF funding is critical to ensure SHPOs/THPOs, who administer the federal historic preservation programs, have the capacity needed to carry out their responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Adequate funding for federal, state and tribal cultural resource staff ensures timely, efficient, and predictable project delivery. This year's request also includes \$25 million to digitize state and tribal records to accelerate the delivery of vital infrastructure projects.

Competitive grant programs under the HPF preserve, document, and exhibit our history. These programs address a wide variety of preservation needs across the country. In 2019, a \$665,000 Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grant was awarded to support the preservation of historic theaters in rural Oregon communities. In 2023, the Chilkoot Indian Association received a \$744,507 Save America's Treasures grant for the rehabilitation of the Noow Hit tribal house, which is the last surviving example of Lingít vernacular architecture in Haines, Alaska.

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

- **As we commemorate our nation's 250th anniversary, Preservation Action recommends this subcommittee support \$250 million in funding for the Historic Preservation Fund in FY27's Department of Interior budget**, including funding at the following levels:
 - **\$70 million for State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs)** who carry out the primary functions of the NHPA including finding and documenting America's historic places, aiding HTC projects, and reviewing impacts of federal projects.
 - **\$34 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs)** who 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.
 - **\$25 million for a Preservation Technology Initiative.** Funding for states and Tribes to digitize records and improve technology to aid in accelerating project delivery.

- **\$13 million for Historically Black Colleges and Universities** preservation grants.
- **\$108 million for six existing competitive grant programs** that provide vital funds to help preserve the places that celebrate our nation's rich history.

Total FY 2027 Historic Preservation Fund Request: \$250 million

Additionally, we appreciate the subcommittee's inclusion of a one-year authorization for the HPF in the FY26 Appropriations bill and urge the subcommittee's continued support.

- **Preservation Action encourages inclusion of language to reauthorize deposits to the Historic Preservation Fund in the FY27 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 work.

National Park Service: Cultural Programs

Cultural Programs support much of the federal historic preservation program. This includes managing the National Register of Historic Places and administering the HTC, among other important activities. The HTC supports historic rehabilitation projects across the country like the revitalization of the Pepperell Mill in Biddeford, ME, which thanks to the HTC has transformed the historic mill into a vibrant mixed used community. The HTC has rehabilitated more than 51,000 historic buildings in all 50 states, leveraged \$257 billion in private investment, and created over 3.4 million jobs since inception, all while returning more to the Treasury than the cost of the program. Preservation Action urges lawmakers to support long-overdue improvements to the HTC to enhance its value and expand access to the credit.

The HTC, along with other key preservation programs, depends on the capacity of SHPOs, THPOs, and NPS staff. 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. Lack of adequate staff at all levels is the biggest threat to project budgets and completion.

Additionally, Preservation Action strongly supports robust funding for Registered 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 preservation programs that NPS 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 urge support for 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 **\$33.5 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 **\$8.585 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 **\$213 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 FY27 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 heritage.

Thank you for valuing the input of the preservation community as you consider the FY27 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