



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

January 12, 2022

The Honorable Joe Manchin
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso,

In support of recent letters sent to you by many other organizations, the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) respectfully requests that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources holds another vote on the nomination of Sarah Bronin to the chairmanship of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) as soon as possible.

The SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With nearly 7,000 members, the SAA represents professional and avocational archaeologists, archaeology students in colleges and universities, and archaeologists working at tribal agencies, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. The SAA has members throughout the United States, as well as in many nations around the world.

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) was a bipartisan bill adopted in recognition that irreplaceable heritage was being lost or destroyed during the planning and construction of federal and federally sponsored infrastructure development projects. This was not, and is still not, a superfluous concern. Each day since its enactment, this law has enabled localities to preserve places that tell the story of who we are so that future generations can learn from and appreciate our past.

One vital component of this law was the creation of the ACHP. Under the NHPA, the ACHP is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that federal undertakings are carried out in a manner that takes into account, and mitigates any damage to, the irreplaceable cultural heritage of the people of the United States. The ongoing vacancy in the chairmanship of the agency hampers the performance of its vital mission. With the recent passage of the new infrastructure bill, that situation will only grow in urgency, so it is vital that the ACHP's full leadership be in place as quickly as possible. Without such leadership, those who rely on the agency to provide guidance and strong decision-making when it comes to cultural resources protection will find it difficult to perform their duties as effectively as is needed. These individuals include State and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, as well as the archaeologists in both the public and private sectors who carry out the work that protects our fragile historic heritage, while also facilitating the construction of essential infrastructure.

Dr. Bronin's nomination was reported favorably by the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on November 18, 2021. While we recognize that some concerns have been raised about her work on zoning issues in Connecticut, senators should remember that such matters are entirely non-federal and constitute

an area over which the ACHP has no jurisdiction whatsoever. We stand behind her abundant qualifications as a candidate for the position: she has advanced degrees in architecture and law and is a published expert on historic preservation law. As a Mexican-American, she has an exemplary record of engaging with numerous communities affected by urban planning. In light of the above, we urge the committee to reapprove her nomination at the nearest opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah L. Nichols". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Deborah L. Nichols, PhD, RPA
President