



## SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

February 1, 2022

The Honorable Teresa Leger Fernández  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1432 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. Leger Fernández,

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) writes in strong support of the Historic Preservation Enhancement Act, legislation that would permanently authorize the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) and double its authorized funding level. These resources will ensure that our states, communities, and tribes will be better able to protect the nation's irreplaceable cultural resources.

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 HPF provides needed critical support to state and tribal historic preservation offices (SHPOs/THPOs) and matching grants to localities, private and public foundations, and private corporations to catalog and preserve historic resources, from historic homes to archaeological sites. The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) directs federal agencies, through the Section 106 review process, to take our history into account when cultural resources under their control face potential loss or damage from land-disturbing undertakings (projects) on federal lands that are funded by or require permits from the federal government. The purpose of the review is to determine if the undertaking will harm historically or archaeologically significant resources that meet the eligibility criteria for the National Register of Historic Places. It is the SHPOs and THPOs and their staffs that advise and track agencies' compliance with Section 106 and the NHPA within their borders.

The Historic Preservation Enhancement Act would address several critical needs. First, the NHPA compliance workload facing understaffed agencies and SHPOs/THPOs has skyrocketed. The passage of the America's Great Outdoors Act, and the recent infrastructure bill, along with the launch of the administration's America the Beautiful initiative, means that thousands of new federal undertakings will need to be reviewed to ensure that historic and archaeological resources are protected, on top of the projects that were already scheduled. Without robust funding for the HPF, the SHPOs/THPOs will not be able to carry out their critical mission, and our irreplaceable cultural heritage will be lost if the federal historic preservation system cannot function. The current annual authorization level of \$150 million, which dates to the 1970s, is simply no longer adequate.

Second, there is also an economic growth element to consider. Most of the actual fieldwork done under Section 106 reviews is carried out by private-sector cultural resource management (CRM) firms, many of

which are small businesses. These firms generate revenues well over \$1 billion annually and create thousands of jobs. Further, the HPF grant programs enable local communities to promote tourism and economic development through preservation of historic and archaeological resources. Thus, the HPF provides impetus for economic expansion well beyond the initial expenditures for review compliance.

Finally, the permanent authorization of the HPF will provide certainty to both the public and private sectors that sufficient federal support for the NHPA can be counted on for the foreseeable future. This will allow SHPOs/THPOs to bring on enough staff to carry out their responsibilities and CRM firms to expand their own workforces, confident that federally supported projects will move forward on schedule.

For these and other reasons, the SAA strongly supports the Historic Preservation Enhancement Act and will urge the House Natural Resources Committee to review and approve the bill as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Deborah L. Nichols".

Deborah L. Nichols, PhD, RPA  
President