

July 10, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: FY 2026 funding of the Historic Preservation Fund

Chair Collins, Vice Chair Murray, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro,

For well over a century, our federal government has recognized its solemn responsibility to provide for a national preservation program that preserves the historical cultural heritage of the United States. From ancient Puebloan sites in the American Southwest to the acquisition of Civil War national battlefield parks, the federal government has long understood the need for national stewardship of historic sites, buildings, and objects of significance. Preserving our nation's unique history inspires, challenges, and promotes greater understanding throughout the United States. The undersigned coalition of national organizations dedicated to preserving our Nation's history appreciates the federal government's continued investment in our country's irreplaceable historic, cultural, and archeological resources.

The National Historic Preservation Act codified our nation's historic preservation program in 1966, and put in place a critical funding mechanism through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) to help ensure due consideration is given to the preservation of historic and cultural resources at the national, state, and local level. In deriving its funding authorization from offshore oil and gas lease revenue (not taxpayer dollars), federal policymakers recognized the importance of a sustainable and enduring investment in historic preservation. Federal delegation of responsibilities to designated State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs), and Certified Local Governments (CLGs) efficiently and expertly guides the preservation of our heritage, encourages the revitalization of communities by enabling bricks and mortar preservation projects, and incentivizes economic development – profoundly benefiting communities nationwide.

The lead-up to our nation's Semiquincentennial presents a unique opportunity to commemorate America's pioneering spirit and highlight the history and sites that unite us all. In 2026, we will not only observe the 250th anniversary of American independence, but also mark the 60th anniversary of the NHPA, the 50th anniversary of the HPF, and the 50th anniversary of the Historic Tax Credit (HTC) program. Taken together, these noteworthy anniversaries merit recognition for the many

ways our national preservation program serves our communities by attracting heritage tourism, fostering community development, supporting businesses and job creation, and promoting thriving local economies.

Congress therefore has a unique opportunity to demonstrate continued, bipartisan commitment by providing for the HPF in the forthcoming FY 2026 Interior and Environment appropriation bills with the inclusion of:

- 1) Robust funding necessary for SHPOs and THPOs to carry out the requirements of the NHPA, ensure CLGs can provide local expertise, and encourage investment in projects that celebrate the nation's rich history to commemorate America's 250th; and**
- 2) A provision for a 1-year extension of the authorization of deposits to the HPF, to renew the dedicated non-taxpayer funding.**

Looking forward, the current year appropriations process has regrettably laid bare the difficult reality that even short-term disruption in the delivery of previously enacted funding for the HPF results in undue harm to historic resources and the nation's historic preservation program. The delay in the distribution of congressionally appropriated FY 2025 HPF resources has, in many instances, resulted in the depletion of critical funding needed by SHPOs and THPOs to carry out their federally mandated responsibilities. These delays hinder the ability of offices to maintain core operations and to support community-driven efforts to preserve historic places of national, regional, and local significance.

While we are encouraged that the disbursement process is now moving forward, this interruption underscores the urgent need for timely and reliable funding for the HPF. These funds are essential for carrying out statutory duties under the NHPA, including the review of federal infrastructure projects under Section 106, oversight of HTC rehabilitation projects, evaluation of National Register of Historic Places nominations, and the maintenance of state and tribal inventories of historic properties. In 2023 alone, HTC projects reviewed and coordinated through SHPOs created 162,000 jobs and were responsible for \$18.5 billion in economic output.

SHPOs serve as vital partners in the national preservation program, and are required to provide a minimum 40 percent non-federal match for HPF grants, with at least 10 percent passed through to CLGs, further leveraging federal investment at the state and local level. THPOs, in turn, assume many of the same responsibilities on Tribal lands, reflecting their sovereignty, cultural values, and traditional knowledge. The availability of HPF funding directly supports the federal government's trust responsibility to Tribal Nations and strengthens preservation capacity in Native communities.

Competitive grants offered under the HPF support the preservation of varied historic sites across the country. Accessible to nonprofits, SHPOs, THPOs, and CLGs, the competitive grant programs leverage federal investment to empower local communities, stimulate economic development, and

preserve the historic fabric that defines our national identity. The Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants help revive Main Streets and rural communities by supporting the rehabilitation of historic commercial properties – driving private investment, creating jobs, and encouraging local entrepreneurship. The Semiquincentennial Grants support bricks-and-mortar preservation of sites directly tied to the founding of our nation, ensuring that key symbols of American independence are preserved for future generations. These grants reflect a fiscally responsible approach to preserving our shared heritage while delivering measurable returns to communities across the country. These are just two of the many competitive grant programs that work to tell the full American story.

Insufficient HPF funding for FY26 will decimate the statutory work of SHPOs and THPOs, jeopardize billions in investment through the slowing or halting of preservation projects, discourage investment and hinder economic growth, and result in negative and irreversible impacts to historic landmarks and cultural and archaeological sites. The federal government plays an invaluable role in preserving our nation's history and our collective sense of place, and we remain committed to working together to identify, protect, and maintain our nation's heritage.

Thank you for your consideration of this request to provide meaningful contributions to the HPF for FY26 and extend the authorization for the program. We remain available to discuss the program in more detail and answer any questions the committee may have.

Sincerely,

National Trust for Historic Preservation
National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers
National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers
National Alliance of Preservation Commissions
Advisory Council on Underwater Archaeology
American Anthropological Association
American Battlefield Trust
American Cultural Resources Association
American Institute of Architects
Asian & Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation
Association for Preservation Technology
Coalition for Archaeological Synthesis
Historic Tax Credit Coalition
Preservation Action
Society for American Archaeology
Society for Historical Archaeology
Society for Industrial Archeology
Main Street America