

# #HISTORYMATTERS



## Welcome to the #HistoryMatters Toolkit

Thank you for speaking up for archaeology and cultural resources management by participating in the 2025 #History Matters campaign with the American Cultural Resources Association (ACRA), Society for American Archaeology (SAA) and Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA).

By organizing an in-district meeting with your federal elected representatives, you are helping to make sure that lawmakers on Capitol Hill understand the critical importance of our sector and how it benefits your local community.

The purpose of these meetings is to educate members of Congress on the work that you do, build or enhance a relationship with your elected representatives, and reiterate why historic preservation, archaeological resources and sites, and heritage protections matter in your policy maker's district.

This Toolkit provides important tips on how to organize an in-district meeting with congressional representatives. If you have additional questions, do not hesitate to reach out to David Lindsay at SAA, Amanda Stratton at ACRA or Richard Veit at SHA.

## Steps for Your In-District Meeting

### *Before Your Meeting*

- **Submit a scheduling request.**

You can use the scheduling request template including in this toolkit and submit your request on the legislator's website. Be sure to include information about your project that pertains to the history of the legislator's district. *Tip: Remain flexible as to the date of your meeting. Flexibility on your part allows you to work with the Congressman's packed schedule and increases the likelihood that you get the meeting.*

- **Follow up, follow up, follow up.**

After your meeting request is submitted, follow up with the district scheduler via phone. You may have to follow up more than once. Member offices get numerous meeting requests per day, so persistence is key to ensuring your request is on top of the list.

- **Develop your talking points.**

Having set talking points for the legislator's visit ensures that you get your point across clearly and succinctly. We provide some talking points about the national importance of the work we do and some of the key issues that we face in Congress – but it is important to tailor your message to your own community. Reinforce the economic (e.g. \$ value of any grants, # of jobs on the site), community, and educational (such as # of students or classrooms visiting the site) value of archaeology and historic preservation. If you need help planning your talking points, contact us.

- **Develop an agenda for the event.**

Have a plan about how the event will unfold: where will you meet the member of Congress (and who will meet them)? Think about how you are going to walk through the site. If any protective gear will be needed (like hard hats), make sure you have it. Determine the best locations to take photos.

- **Alert the legislator's office to any sensitive issues.**

This is especially important if your project is located on a tribal site. Remind the legislator and their staff to be sensitive to cultural issues particular to that community.

### *During Your Meeting*

- **Be organized and on point.**

Remember that the legislator and/or their staff may not be well-versed in the industry, so avoid being overly technical during the site visit. Keep your messaging personal and passionate!

- **Allow time for the legislator and staff to ask questions.**

- **Don't forget to make the key points** you want to convey from your talking points. Remember: the primary goal of the event is to educate and build a trusting relationship. You don't want to hit the lawmaker with a list of demands, but you certainly want to tie how the site you're visiting relates to federal issues (for example, pointing out that the project you are touring was made possible in part by the Historic Preservation Fund.)

- **Take photos** of legislator posed at your site. Confirm the spelling of their name.

- **Relax and have fun!**

You are the subject matter expert on your project and in your field. You can be a resource to the legislator on all things related to your industry!

- **Don't:**
  - Make up facts if you don't know the answer. Sometimes legislators will pose policy-related questions that you may not have the answer to. Don't panic and make something up on the spot – simply say you will get back to them with the answer, and circle back with ACRA, SAA, and SHA staff.
  - Discuss campaign contributions or other political activities

#### *After Your Meeting*

- **Send a thank you letter to the legislator**

Within a few days of your meeting, send a thank you letter to the legislator and any staff in attendance. You should also thank the staff member who assisted with the scheduling. *Tip: Reiterate the key messages in your talking points in your thank you letter to remind the staff what was discussed (Do NOT simply send them a copy of the talking points!).*
- **Post photos with a complimentary message**

Use the #HistoryMatters hashtag, which can be customized to your local area (e.g. #HistoryMatters in Arizona). Tag your legislator so they get positive attention. *Tip: Sample messages are in this toolkit that you can customize.*
- **Provide photos and feedback to ACRA/SAA/SHA staff**

Send a summary of the meeting and any photos taken to ACRA, SAA, and SHA staff. These will be promoted on their respective websites and social media properties.
- **Work with the legislator's press staff on publicity for the meeting**

Your site visit is a great opportunity for both you and the legislator to publicize your project to the community. The legislator's communications staff will be able to help you effectively work with local media to publicize the meeting.



### **Draft Scheduling Request**

*Use the text below to invite your legislator to your site. You can submit your request using the scheduling form on the legislator's website or the [SAA action tool](#) can help you find your legislators.*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As a [insert specialty] who works to protect and preserve our heritage in [state/region], I am writing to invite you to visit an exciting project in our district where history is being uncovered.

The past is our shared cultural heritage. Understanding and appreciating that past helps us better plan our present and future. The work that I/my firm does preserves this heritage for future generations and enriches our communities by educating the public and creating local economic benefits.

The federal government plays an important major role in supporting historic preservation across the country. Laws like the National Historic Preservation Act, for example, make sure that we can protect the past while making progress towards the future and provide much-needed support to state and local preservation efforts. As we prepare to celebrate America's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday next year, understanding and celebrating the past is as important as ever.

I am currently working on a project at \_\_\_\_\_, in your (state / district). I am pleased to invite you to visit the site during the upcoming August recess to learn about our work, what we have discovered, how federal laws help make this work possible, and how this knowledge benefits the nation and our community.

Please have your staff contact me at \_\_\_\_\_ to arrange the details. I look forward to seeing you in August.

Sincerely,



### **Sample Talking Points**

*Below are some sample points to use as you speak with the elected representative.*

*Remember to develop talking points about the project you are visiting and how preservation activities benefit the elected representative's district or state.*

#### **Archaeology**

- Members of the public value archaeology and find it exciting and interesting. A 2023 Ipsos poll found that 88% of Americans say the work archaeologists do is important.
- Archaeological collections, sites, and field schools employ your constituents and spend money in your community to buy supplies.
- America's heritage is fragile and invaluable and archaeologists are identifying, interpreting, and conserving our history for future generations.

#### **Cultural Resource Management Industry**

- CRM firms employ thousands of cultural resource professionals, including archaeologists, architectural historians, historians, ethnographers, and an increasingly diverse group of related specialists.
- Our industry facilitates the development and construction of infrastructure projects of all sizes, while making sure we consider the impact on cultural and historical resources.
- CRM firms are, by and large, small businesses, and face the same challenges that all small businesses face.

#### **Historic Preservation**

- Historic preservation, like the project we are visiting today, is a collaborative effort between the private sector and government at all levels
- Preservation enables us to understand the past - what happened here, why it happened, and what lessons it holds for us today

- But preservation isn't simply about history; preservation is a powerful economic driver. It creates opportunities for tourism. It helps revitalize old buildings for new uses, like housing and retail. And it creates well-paying jobs while increasing property values.
- *(NOTE: Ask your SHPO if they have any specific data on the benefits of preservation in your state or region)*

### **The Federal Role in Preservation**

- The federal government plays an important role in preservation activities.
- Thanks to the Historic Preservation Fund, states and Tribes have more resources to identify and restore historic properties.
- The Fund helps communities understand their heritage and protect significant historical sites.
- And it does so without using a dime of taxpayer money, since all the funding comes from royalties for oil and gas leases.

## Sample Social Media Posts

The #HistoryMatters campaign enables all archaeologists and cultural resource professionals to spread the word about how preservation benefits their communities.

When posting on social media, please use the *#HistoryMatters* hashtag.

We recommend that you also include an additional hashtag tailoring History Matters to include your state or community; e.g., *#HistoryMatters In Sacramento* or *#HistoryMatters In Vermont*.

### Archaeology/CRM

There's always something just below the surface. History matters in Anytown, where Rep. / Mayor \_\_\_\_\_ joined archaeologists to uncover and preserve past at SITE LOCATION. #HistoryMatters

INSERT YOUR PHOTO HERE

### Museums/Historical Sites

History Matters at X Museum, where researchers help whispers from the past become the stories of today. Plan your visit and find out how the past influences how you live now. #HistoryMatters

INSERT YOUR PHOTO HERE