

July 26, 2013

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
Appropriations Committee
H-307 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

We are deeply concerned about the sharp decrease in funding for the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) proposed in the fiscal year 2014 Interior, Environment, Related Agencies Appropriations spending bill. Without adequate funding, America's national treasures will be forever lost. The HPF is the primary, and in many communities the only, means to ensure appropriate implementation of our nation's historic preservation laws and the only way to adequately safeguard our historic resources.

For nearly the past half century, the HPF has enabled successful federal-state and federal-tribal partnerships that have helped preserve historic sites and communities throughout the nation. The FY14 Interior, Environment, Related Agencies Appropriations bill would decrease funding for the HPF by 19 percent, a reduction that will result in an inability to protect important historic sites and the immediate loss of American jobs.

State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) are funded through the HPF and form the backbone of our Nation's historic preservation programs. Together these programs provide the tools needed to revitalize, rehabilitate, and protect the places that give meaning to our great nation. For the many SHPOs that recently experienced 20 to 40 percent reductions in State funding, any additional reduction in federal funding will mean immediate personnel lay-offs. Without these staff, timely review of federal undertakings will not be possible – including consultation to certify Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit projects. Reduced funding would also mean a severe loss to SHPO-administered programs such as Certified Local Governments, as well as services that provide support for heritage tourism, a \$192 billion industry.

The negative impact of reduced funding will exacerbate the already underfunded THPO program. Today 142 Indian tribes operate THPO programs that work to protect cultural resources on and off tribal lands. These programs have assumed the SHPO responsibilities for their respective tribal communities and serve a critical function in the approval process for both federal projects and basic local infrastructure activities like septic and waterline installations and school construction. The anticipated addition of new THPOs by the National Park Service in fiscal year 2014, coupled with reduced funding, will represent the lowest funding per THPO in the program's seventeen year history, guaranteeing the loss of jobs, delayed federal and local reviews, and loss of important cultural assets.

We ask that the Administration's fiscal year FY14 budget request of \$58.91 million for the program, which includes funding for a competitive grant program to assist underrepresented communities be allocated for the HPF. Funding these core historic preservation programs represents a basic investment in America's treasured legacy multiplied many times over through public-private economic partnerships and ventures. Most importantly, funding from the HPF creates jobs and economic opportunities while at the same time ensuring the protection of historic resources that might otherwise be lost forever.

Sincerely,

National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers
National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Preservation Action
National Alliance of Preservation Commissions
Society for American Archaeology
American Cultural Resources Association
Society for Historical Archaeology
Heritage Preservation