

NCSHPO

National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers
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June 22, 2023

Hon. Charles (Chuck) Sams
Director, National Park Service

Shannon Estenoz
Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife
and Parks, US Department of the Interior

via email

RE: Operational needs of State Historic Preservation Offices FY24/FY25

Dear Director Sams and Asst. Secretary Estenoz,

I write today in appreciation of your work on behalf of the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the National Park Service (NPS), and to provide you background on the vital work of our national network of 59 State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs). As you know, we work together in partnership with DOI through the NPS not only to fulfill the responsibilities outlined in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, but also to preserve and elevate the shared history and experiences of all Americans. To continue our work, we ask for your support for the necessary Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) funding required to fulfill our shared duties and obligations.

NCSHPO remains deeply grateful of efforts undertaken in FY23 to ensure no SHPO office experienced a funding decrease as a result of the recently adopted changes to the HPF apportionment formula. However, we recognize that the funding level of \$62.1 million resulted in 23 SHPOs failing to see an increase in funding – and for FY24, under the recent budget agreement, it is likely to be the same.

Recognizing the involved nature of the federal agency budget planning process, we are at this time proactively looking forward to FY25 appropriations for the HPF, and would welcome a conversation with your agency on what SHPO funding needs exist. It is our hope that early communication will help you understand the specific challenges we as public servants are facing in performing our federally mandated and community-driven responsibilities. Staffing shortages, tremendous GIS/data disparities between States, increasing reviews of complex, time-sensitive infrastructure projects, and an ever-growing amount of technical assistance to a diverse constituency requires holistic approaches to historic designations and local history. We believe such information could greatly assist your efforts in preparing a FY25 budget request to further support historic preservation efforts nationwide through the constituent-focused, on-the-ground national network of State Historic Preservation Offices.

This year is a particularly meaningful year for historic preservation, as we approach the expiration of the current program authorization of the HPF at the end of September. **We cannot emphasize enough how much reauthorization of this program is of paramount importance to national historic preservation efforts; reauthorization will assure federal historic preservation funding continues and, quite simply, will demonstrate the continued commitment of Congress and the Nation to historic preservation efforts.**

Notably, the current authorization amount of \$150 million has gone unchanged since 1976. We believe this number must be adjusted not only to reflect inflation, but to reflect the growth, success, and growth this program has represented through the last five decades. Broad support exists to increase the authorized amount to \$250 million to meet current operational needs. Additionally, this program has proved its worth time and again, and for that reason, a 10-year term reauthorization is sought. To this end, bipartisan legislation ([H.R. 3350](#), the *Historic Preservation Fund Reauthorization Act*) has been introduced in the House by Representatives Turner, Blumenauer, Leger Fernandez, and Carey. It is expected a Senate version will be forthcoming. Your public support of this effort would be much appreciated, and I hope you will consider drafting a letter of support to the Chairs of the Senate Energy & Natural Resources and House Natural Resources committees, as well as any other avenues you deem appropriate.

Our Conference and its dedicated public servants remain committed to the preservation of our history, giving a voice to all Americans, driving economic development and job creation, and revitalizing communities.

NCSHPO would appreciate the opportunity to arrange a call to discuss funding needs further and answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully yours,



Ramona M. Bartos
NCSHPO Board President

cc: Joy Beasley
Jenifer Eggleston
Serena Bellew