

Hon. Sara C. Bronin
Chair

Jordan E. Tannenbaum
Vice Chairman

Reid J. Nelson
Executive Director



July 31, 2023

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Tiffany
Chairman, Subcommittee on Federal Lands
House Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Neguse
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Federal Lands
House Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Grijalva, Subcommittee Chairman Tiffany, and Subcommittee Ranking Member Neguse:

I am writing to express the support of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) for the Historic Preservation Fund Reauthorization Act (H.R. 3350). Established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the ACHP is the independent federal agency charged with advising the President and Congress on matters relating to historic preservation. The proposed bill would reauthorize the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) and increase its annual funding level. Reauthorization of the HPF is an urgent need since the fund's current authorization expires on September 30. Prompt reauthorization is necessary to ensure uninterrupted deposits into the fund and ensure predictability for this critically important source of federal funding for historic preservation.

As you know, the HPF is foundational to the national historic preservation program, providing annual funding to support the work of State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs). Such work forms the backbone of preservation activity in the nation, including conducting surveys of historic properties; preparing nominations to the National Register of Historic Places; assisting federal agencies in reviewing the historic preservation impacts of federal projects in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act; assisting in federal Historic Tax Credit project reviews; implementing disaster recovery grants; and conducting preservation education and planning.

The HPF also is a major source of funding for competitive preservation grant programs. Through such programs, Congress directs funds to address timely and pressing preservation needs. In FY 2023, HPF grant programs include the following: Underrepresented Communities Grants; Save America's Treasures Grants; African American Civil Rights Grants; Historically Black Colleges and Universities Grants; Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants; Semiquincentennial Grants; and History of Equal Rights Grants.

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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The HPF does not use taxpayer dollars. Annually, \$150 million in annual Outer Continental Shelf revenue from oil and gas leases is deposited into the fund. However, this funding level has not been increased since 1976. Growing workloads for SHPOs and THPOs, expansion of HPF-funded competitive grant programs, an increasing number of designated THPOs, plus inflation have helped to make this funding level inadequate. The proposed bill would increase the amount deposited annually in the HPF from \$150 million to \$250 million. This is in keeping with recent congressional and Administration support for appropriating more than \$150 million annually from the fund. The President's Budget since FY 2022 has called for increased appropriations for the HPF, and Congress appropriated \$204.515 million for FY 2023.

Increasing funding for the HPF would help preserve more of the historic places that Americans care deeply about. There would be more opportunities for competitive grant funding but also for capacity building for SHPOs and THPOs, which is critically important. Now and in coming years, the anticipated influx of federal projects to address critical issues such as energy development and infrastructure permitting, disaster planning and resilience, and climate change adaptation would benefit from SHPO and THPO funding levels sufficient to ensure their effective participation in the planning and review of such projects.

The proposed bill would reauthorize the HPF for 10 years. The ACHP has advocated in the past for permanent authorization for the HPF to enhance the certainty of continued funding support. The ACHP supports the proposed bill as written but hopes that the alternative of permanent authorization can continue to be considered as the reauthorization process moves forward.

Please feel free to contact me if the ACHP can be of any assistance during further consideration of the Historic Preservation Fund Reauthorization Act, or your staff may wish to follow up with ACHP Executive Director Reid Nelson at rnelson@achp.gov. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara C. Bronin', written in a cursive style.

Sara C. Bronin
Chair