

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

[[DATE]]

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Chair  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski,

Thank you for your longstanding support for preserving America's special places, and thank you in particular for providing \$188.666 million in funding for the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) in the FY 2024 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill. We write to request that you continue this support by appropriating up to \$225 million for the Historic Preservation Fund for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. Of the total, we request that \$70 million support State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), \$34 million support Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs), \$40 million support the Save America's Treasures grant program, \$13 million support competitive grants for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, \$17 million support Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grants to revitalize historic properties and generate economic development in rural communities, and \$5 million support a competitive grant program to survey and document historic resources associated with under-represented communities. As part of this request, we also support \$28 million for African American Civil Rights Initiative Competitive Grants and \$7 million for the History of Equal Rights grant program to preserve the sites and stories associated with securing civil rights for All Americans. Finally, we strongly support \$11 million for the Semiquincentennial grant program to preserve historical sites commemorating the 250th Anniversary of the United States of America.

SHPOs lead efforts to promote and preserve our nation's unique historic and cultural heritage. SHPOs carry out the National Historic Preservation Act, which provides citizens with the tools they need to revitalize, rehabilitate, and protect the resources our communities value most. In FY22 SHPOs reviewed and consulted on 177,400 Federal undertakings (a 42.7% increase over FY21), provided 83,200 National Register eligibility opinions, and surveyed over 5.3 million acres for cultural resources. SHPOs also assist in administering the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program that has created more than 3.2 million jobs and leveraged over \$235 billion in private investment since the program's inception.

Just as the SHPOs review federal undertakings on state lands, Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) review federal undertakings on tribal government lands. There were only 12 THPOs when the program first provided funding in 1996. Today, there are more than 200 THPOs for which Congress and the United States have a responsibility to sustain the

government-to-government relationship with the Tribes. While funding for THPOs as a category has grown in past years, we must ensure those increases are felt at the level of individual Tribal Historic Preservation Offices.

HPF's competitive grant programs preserve, document, and exhibit diverse histories. These programs address a wide variety of preservation needs across the country and fund various types of work. In 2019, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department was awarded a \$665,000 Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grant to implement a grant program for the preservation of historic theaters. Eight theaters received between \$80,000-\$90,000 to repair and preserve their venues. In 2023, the Chilkoot Indian Association received a Save America's Treasures grant for the stabilization and rehabilitation of the Noow Hit tribal house. Noow Hit is the last surviving example of Lingít vernacular architecture in Haines, Alaska and this \$744,507 grant preserves the knowledge of traditional construction techniques.

Funding for these historic preservation programs is vital for ensuring the resources necessary to tell the complete story of America. Infrastructure investments funded by the bipartisan infrastructure law have added significantly to the workload of SHPOs and THPOs, so we must ensure these offices are appropriately equipped. The program authorization of the Historic Preservation Fund expired in 2023, but was given a one-year extension in the FY 2024 appropriations bill. It is imperative the program is fully reauthorized to address the ongoing funding needs and to provide stability to preservation programs. Historic preservation is an investment in towns and cities throughout the country that benefit from tourists visiting historic sites and the public and private investment in restoring historic buildings. This funding is both an economic and historical imperative that creates jobs and protects historic resources that might otherwise be lost forever.

[[CLOSING]]

[[SIGNATURES]]

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