



November 26, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair, Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On September 26, 2024, Hurricane Helene made landfall as a Category 4 storm initially impacting the Big Bend region of Florida. Inundating Tampa Bay, Helene shattered storm surge records. With sustained winds of 140 miles per hour, Helene was the deadliest hurricane to hit the United States mainland since Katrina in 2005.¹ This intense storm generated catastrophic rainfall which triggered immense flooding in western North Carolina, East Tennessee, and southwestern Virginia. As recovery efforts from Helene continued, Hurricane Milton made landfall near Siesta Key, Florida as a Category 3 storm.

These devastating storms took the lives of over 250 people and destroyed or damaged residences, businesses, roadways, utilities. The six states impacted by these hurricanes are home to 5,440 listings on the National Register of Historic Places (including 746 National Register Historic Districts and 81 National Historic Landmarks), as well as 962 historic tax credit projects. Preserving these historic sites is essential to safeguarding our cultural heritage and maintaining the unique character of these communities for future generations. As the effort to rebuild continues, we call upon Congress to aid in the rehabilitation of significant historic properties in the path of these storms.

The varying regional impacts of these storms requires a variety of tools in a disaster assistance package to stabilize and remediate damage in **Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia**. We were pleased to see recognition of the catastrophic Maui fires and support the proposed \$20 million for historic preservation and cultural resources

¹ Shapiro, Emily et al. ABC News. October 7, 2024. [Hurricane Helene updates: Death toll surpasses 230 as rescue efforts continue.](#)

restoration through supplemental appropriations under the Historic Preservation Fund. Likewise, we seek funds to rebuild after the most recent disasters across the Southeast.

1. Historic Preservation Disaster Relief Grants

Create a \$100 million grant program within the federal Historic Preservation Fund for the repair of damaged historic properties to be used for eligible activities outlined by the National Historic Preservation Act, including the survey & compliance, preservation, stabilization, rehabilitation, and repair of historic structures and sites listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Projects that receive insurance payments and other state or federal credits or grants remain eligible for these grants but must clearly demonstrate that these funds will be used for projects not fully covered by insurance or other state or federal funding sources. Grants are to be administered by the State or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer in each State and would be available to non-federal owners of National Register or National Register-eligible properties including individuals, non-profit organizations and developers, and do not require a non-federal match.

2. Adjustments to the Federal Historic Tax Credit Program

Increase the rehabilitation tax credit for properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places from 20% to 26%. Additionally, the substantial rehabilitation test shall be lowered to 50% of a building's adjusted basis, in order to qualify more income-producing buildings.

Disaster Relief Grants Proposed Legislative Text:

For an additional amount for the "Historic Preservation Fund" for necessary expenses related to the consequences of Hurricanes Helene & Milton and safeguard from future damages, \$100,000,000, to remain available September 30, 2029: Provided, That of the funds provided under this heading, shall be provided to State and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, after consultation with the National Park Service, for costs necessary to complete eligible activities as outlined by the National Historic Preservation Act, including compliance activities required by section 306108 of title 54, United States Code, survey work, and costs needed to administer the program: Provided, That grants shall only be available for areas that have received a major disaster declaration pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.): Provided further, That individual grants shall not be subject to a non-Federal matching requirement: Provided further, That such amount is designated by the Congress as being for an emergency requirement pursuant to section 253(e)(2) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985.

Federal Historic Tax Credit Program Proposed Legislative Text:

INCREASE IN REHABILITATION CREDIT.—In the case of qualified rehabilitation expenditures (as defined in section 47(c)) paid or incurred during the period [CONFORMING DATES WITH THE REST OF THE PACKAGE] with respect to any qualified rehabilitated building or certified historic structure (as defined in section 47(c)) located in areas that the President determines to be a major disaster under section 102(2) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122(2)) due to [CONFORMING LANGUAGE WITH THE REST OF THE PACKAGE], subsection (a) of section 47 (relating to rehabilitation credit) shall be applied by substituting ‘26 percent’ for ‘20 percent’ in paragraph (2) thereof.

As national historic preservation organizations, we and our members appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this request to support the communities affected by these devastating disasters. We are ready to assist in any way we can with these requests.

Sincerely,

National Trust for Historic Preservation

National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers

Preservation Action

American Cultural Resources Association

National Alliance of Preservation Commissions

CC: The Honorable Earl Blumenauer, Co-Chair Historic Preservation Caucus
The Honorable Mike Turner, Co-Chair Historic Preservation Caucus
The Honorable Teresa Leger Fernandez