# Historic Preservation

## Request

- We support FY 2019 funding of $55 million for State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and $15 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs).
- We urge Congress to restore funding of $30 million for Save America's Treasures and $4.6 million for Preserve America.
- We support FY 2019 funding of $25 million for competitive grants to preserve the sites and stories of the Civil Rights movement.
- We urge Congress to continue to support the Historic Tax Credit by cosponsoring the Historic Tax Credit Improvement Act, H.R. 1158 and S. 425.

## Introduction

State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) carry out the work of the federal government in the states and tribal communities: finding America's historic places, making nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, reviewing impacts of federal projects, providing assistance to developers seeking a rehabilitation tax credit, creating alliances with local government preservation commissions and conducting preservation education and planning. This federal-state-local foundation of America's historic preservation program was established by the National Historic Preservation Act.

Established in 1998, Save America's Treasures is a public-private partnership that includes the American Architectural Foundation, the National Park Service, the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, and other federal cultural agencies. Save America's Treasures has designated and restored over 1,200 projects, created an estimated 16,000 jobs, and awarded over $300 million in public and private grants to preservation efforts across the country. The projects include iconic objects like the Star-Spangled Banner and major historical structures like the office of civil rights leader Medgar Evers in Jackson, Mississippi.

Preserve America was launched in 2003 as a White House initiative to promote and support community preservation efforts. The program issued over 250 grants ranging from $20,000 to $250,000 designed to complement the Save America's Treasures grant program. More than $20 million was awarded for interpretation and education, promotion, planning, research, and documentation and training.

The Historic Tax Credit (HTC) was permanently written into the tax code over three decades ago and has been a widely used redevelopment tool for cities, towns, and rural communities across the country. The HTC has a proven track record of stimulating economic growth and creating jobs through public-private leveraging opportunities. Through the life of the program, the HTC has created more than 2.4 million well-paying, local jobs, leveraged more than $131 billion in private investment, and preserved more than 42,000 buildings that form the historic fabric of our nation.

**Talking Points**

- The 2005 Heritage Health Index of archives, libraries, historical societies, and museums concluded that action is needed to prevent the loss of 190 million artifacts that are in need of conservation treatment: 59 percent have collections damaged by light, 56 percent have insufficient security to protect their collections, 80 percent do not have an emergency plan that includes collections, 71 percent need additional training and expertise for staff caring for collections, and only 13 percent have access to endowment funds for preservation.

- Historic preservation programs, including the Historic Tax Credit, matter now more than ever—not only because they protect our national heritage, but because they also serve as economic development engines and job creators in the thousands of communities they serve. Funds invested in building rehabilitation have been shown to create more jobs and more retail activity than those spent on new construction.

- A 2009 report to Congress by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation found Preserve America to be addressing many state, local, and regional heritage tourism needs with a relatively small federal investment.

**Status**

- Historic preservation programs are funded annually through the Department of the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill. The federal government is currently funded by a continuing resolution at FY 2017 levels until final FY 2018 totals are agreed upon.

- Congress provided $47.9 million for SHPOs, $10.5 million to THPOs, and $500,000 for grants to underserved communities—all through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF)—in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017. They also provided an additional $13 million from the HPF to document, interpret, and preserve the stories and sites associated with the Civil Rights Movement and the African-American experience. Save America's Treasures (SAT) received $5 million in FY 2017 through the HPF, the first funding it has received since FY 2010. Preserve America has not been funded since FY 2010.

- The president's FY 2019 budget proposes dramatically cutting funding through the HPF to $26.9 million for SHPOs and $5.7 million for THPOs, while calling for the elimination of funding for Civil Rights grants, underserved communities, and Save America's Treasures.

- The House of Representatives proposed level funding for historic preservation programs in FY 2018.

- The Senate proposed level funding for SHPOs, THPOs, underserved communities, and Civil Rights sites in FY 2018. In place of direct preservation grants like Save America's Treasures, it proposed $3 million in funding that states, tribes, or nonprofits would sub-grant to revitalize historic properties.

- Comprehensive tax reform legislation enacted in December 2017 repealed the 10 percent historic tax credit, but maintained the 20 percent historic tax credit for certified historic structures. In an effort to reduce costs, this 20 percent credit must now be claimed over a 5-year period. The Historic Tax Credit Improvement Act would increase the credit to 30 percent for transactions under $3.75 million and make other updates to facilitate investment in small projects, increasing access for smaller communities.