



## Historic Preservation

### Request

We urge Congress to:

- support FY 2021 funding of \$61 million for State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and \$22 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs).
- provide \$18 million for Save America's Treasures.
- provide \$28 million for competitive grants to preserve the sites and stories of the Civil Rights Movement.
- support \$10 million for Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grants for the rehabilitation of historic properties and economic development of rural communities.
- continue to support the Historic Tax Credit by cosponsoring the Historic Tax Credit Growth and Opportunity Act (H.R. 2825/S. 2615).
- support the legislative proposals recommended by the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission in its [report to the President](#) on the country's 250th commemoration.

### 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 National Park Service, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and other federal cultural agencies. The grant program helps preserve nationally significant historic properties and collections that convey our nation's rich heritage to future generations of Americans. Since 1999, there have been almost 4,000 requests for funding totaling \$1.54 billion. In response to these requests, \$340 million was awarded to more than 1,300 recipients creating more than 16,000 jobs 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.

The Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants Program is a new Historic Preservation Fund grant program created in fiscal year 2018 that supports the rehabilitation of historic properties and fosters economic development of rural communities through subgrants. This program funds physical preservation projects for historic sites, including architectural and engineering services through subgrants to rural communities.

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 (HHI) 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.
- A 2019 Institute of Museum and Library Services report on data from a 10-year follow-up survey on the HHI concluded that preservation is part of the mission for a vast majority of U.S. collecting institutions. Yet many, especially small institutions, have not yet prepared for emergencies and have faced challenges in many actions related to preservation, including conservation practices with digital content.
- 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 many 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.
- In late 2019, the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) released its first-ever *National Visitation Report*. Its survey of 1,250 institutions around the country found that visitation to history organizations increased nearly 6 percent over the past several years and that some of the strongest visitation growth occurred at small history organizations.

## Status

- Historic preservation programs are funded annually through the Department of the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill.
- Congress provided \$52.7 million for SHPOs, \$13.7 million to THPOs, and \$750,000 for grants to underserved communities—all through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF)—in FY 2020. They also provided an additional \$18.8 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 \$16 million in FY 2020 and the Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grant program received \$7.5 million.
- As in past years, the president's FY 2021 budget is expected to propose dramatically cutting funding through the HPF for SHPOs and THPOs, while calling for the elimination of funding for Civil Rights Initiative grant program, underserved communities, and Save America's Treasures.
- 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 Growth and Opportunity Act of 2019 (H.R. 2825/S. 2615), 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.