

Historic Preservation

Request

We urge Congress to:

- support the permanent reauthorization of Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), and increase the authorization to at least \$300 million annually.
- support FY 2024 funding of at least \$70 million for State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and at least \$34 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs).
- provide at least the following amounts for competitive grant programs under the HPF:
 - \$40 million for Save America’s Treasures
 - \$28 million for African American Civil Rights
 - \$17 million for Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grants for the rehabilitation of historic properties and economic development of rural communities
 - \$13 million for Historically Black Colleges/Universities
 - \$11 million for U.S. Semiquincentennial celebration grants for our nation’s 250th commemoration
 - \$7 million for Equal Rights grants
 - \$5 million for Underrepresented Community grants
- support the Historic Tax Credit by cosponsoring the Historic Tax Credit Growth and Opportunity Act upon the bill’s reintroduction.

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 (NHPA).

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 was 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.

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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 US 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, protect our national heritage, while at the same time serving as economic development engines and job creators in communities nationwide. 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.
- In FY 2023 an omnibus spending bill outlined appropriations for the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) with a record-setting overall funding level of over \$204 million. \$62.15 million of which was allocated to State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and \$23 million to Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs). Competitive grant programs received funding as follows: Save America's Treasures (SAT): \$26.5 million, African American Civil Rights: \$24 million, Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grant program: \$12.5 million, Historically Black Colleges/Universities: \$11 million, Semiquincentennial celebration grants: \$10

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million, History of Equal Rights grants: \$5 million, Underrepresented Community grants: \$1.25 million.

- It is a priority to achieve reauthorization of the HPF, to ensure the program remains a priority to appropriately fund SHPOs, THPOs, and the various preservation grant programs funded through the FY 2024 appropriations process. Specifically, with the recent addition of \$500 billion in new infrastructure spending, SHPOs are in dire need of resources to operate their programs and to fulfill responsibilities under the NHPA to efficiently review and comment on federal undertakings.