

Historic Preservation

Request

We urge Congress to:

- support the reauthorization of the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), which is expired as of September 30, 2023; and increase the program authorization to no less than \$250 million annually.
- support FY 2025 by appropriating the HPF no less than \$225 million of which at least \$70 million should go toward funding State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and \$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.
- include museums in, and provide robust funding for, programs for federal agencies tasked with carrying out America 250 programming and commemorations in the FY 2025 appropriations process.

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 - surveying 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 partnership reflects America's historic preservation program as 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

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include iconic objects such as the Star-Spangled Banner and major historical structures such as the office of civil rights leader Medgar Evers in Jackson, Mississippi.

The Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants Program, created in fiscal year 2018, 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 3 million well-paying, local jobs, leveraged more than \$199.1 billion in private investment in historic rehabilitation, and certified more than 48,000 projects 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.
- The American Association for State and Local History's (AASLH) 2023 National Visitation Report found that visits to history organizations increased by 37 percent from 2021 to 2022, a continuation of the recovery trend that began in 2021. Although this overall number represents substantial growth and is a positive sign for the field, most history institutions still received fewer visitors last year than they did before the beginning of the pandemic.

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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 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.