

**Statement of the National Trust for Historic Preservation
Shaw Sprague, Vice President of Government Relations
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations, United States House of Representatives
National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Endowments
for the Arts and for the Humanities**

March 17, 2023

Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Pingree, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I appreciate the opportunity to present the National Trust for Historic Preservation's recommendations for FY 2024 appropriations. My name is Shaw Sprague, and I am the Vice President of Government Relations. The National Trust is a privately funded nonprofit chartered by Congress in 1949. We work to save America's historic places to enrich our future.

We offer our deep gratitude for the robust funding this Subcommittee provided for all historic preservation priorities during the FY 2023 cycle. Thank you for considering recommendations made by the National Trust. We look forward to continuing our work with this Subcommittee as you address the ongoing need for investments to sustain our nation's rich heritage of cultural and historic resources that also generate lasting economic and civic vitality for communities throughout the nation.

For the fifth year in a row, we have also produced "[The Preservation Budget: Select Preservation Priorities for FY 2024 Appropriations](#),"¹ which includes more information on the programs identified below, including funding levels over time and many remarkable examples of program successes.

National Park Service: Historic Preservation Fund. The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) is the principal source of funding to implement the nation's preservation programs. The National Trust is enormously appreciative of the six successive historic funding levels the Subcommittee has provided to the HPF, including the FY 2023 enacted level of \$204.515 million, the highest appropriated amount in the program's history. While increased investment in the HPF has facilitated innovative and impactful historic preservation work across the country, additional appropriations are needed to ensure a more complete historic narrative is preserved for future generations and lesser-known places of historic and cultural significance may continue to enrich our communities.

HPF funding supports fundamental preservation activities such as survey, nomination of properties to the National Register of Historic Places, public education, and project reviews required for federal Historic Tax Credit (HTC) projects. Among many highlights, we would like to emphasize the Subcommittee's sustained support for the African American Civil Rights grants program to preserve and highlight sites and stories associated with securing civil rights for All

¹ <https://forum.savingplaces.org/viewdocument/the-preservation-budget-fy2024>

Americans. We would also like to highlight the extraordinary impact Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants have in fostering economic development in our nation's rural communities. The competitive grant programs within the HPF are having a transformative impact in communities throughout the country and these investments are helping preserve a broader historic narrative while revitalizing communities and creating local jobs. State and Tribal historic preservation offices are at the forefront of protecting our nation's historic and cultural resources and are consistently asked to do more with less funding. The National Trust strongly supports addressing this unmet financial need.

We respectfully request that Congress provide a total FY 2024 HPF appropriation of \$225 million. Within that funding we recommend:

- \$70 million for State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs)
- \$34 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs)
- \$28 million for competitive grants to preserve the sites and stories of efforts to advance African American Civil Rights
- \$7 million for the History of Equal Rights Grants program to preserve the sites and stories associated with securing civil rights for All Americans, including women, American Latino, Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and LGBTQ Americans
- \$13 million for grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities to preserve and rehabilitate historic buildings
- \$40 million for Save America's Treasures grants
- \$17 million for Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grants
- \$5 million for Underrepresented Community grants
- \$11 million for Semiquincentennial Grants program

National Park Service: Operation of the National Park System. Over the past 25 years, more than 50 parks have been added to the System, many of which preserve historic places and themes that have been previously underrepresented. We encourage the Committee to provide funding of \$3.26 billion to maintain NPS operations, ensure stewardship of historic and cultural resources and prevent reductions in visitor services at a time when our national parks are more popular than ever. Within this funding, we recommend robust funding for Resource Stewardship, the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, the African American Civil Rights Network, the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network, and the Japanese American World War II History Network.

National Park Service: Deferred Maintenance. The NPS is responsible for maintaining a system comprised of more than 85 million acres that tell the stories of remarkable people and events in our country's history. Unfortunately, after over 100 years of operation and inconsistent public funding, the NPS faces a multi-million dollar deferred maintenance backlog. Deferred maintenance in our national parks puts historic and cultural sites at risk of permanent damage or loss, and in the absence of funding, the condition of these assets will continue to deteriorate and

become more expensive to repair and preserve in the future. We also recommend sustained increases for specific line items to ensure the maintenance backlog continues to decrease.

- **Construction.** We recommend \$145 million in funding for Line-Item Construction projects that address the deferred maintenance for the NPS' highest priority non-transportation assets with project costs greater than \$1 million.
- **Repair and Rehabilitation; Cyclic Maintenance.** We are enormously appreciative of the Committee's commitment to enhancing these accounts with significant investments since FY 2016. We recommend additional increases for Repair and Rehabilitation at \$150 million and maintaining \$279 million for Cyclic Maintenance to ensure routine and emerging needs.

National Park Service: Cultural Programs. Within its cultural programs, the NPS manages many critical historic preservation activities, including management of the National Register of Historic Places and the National Historic Landmarks Program, certification of federal HTC projects, coordination of federal archaeology programs, and the administration of invaluable and targeted grant funding. These grant programs include the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Grants, Japanese American Confinement Sites Grants, American Battlefield Protection Program Assistance Grants, and many more. We also urge the Committee to support funding for the newly authorized African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program.

In total, the National Trust recommends \$46 million for Cultural Programs for FY 2024, which includes \$3 million for the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program. Additional increases in this account will enhance modernization of the National Register and support sustained demands to review and approve federal HTC projects.

National Park Service: National Heritage Areas. We recommend \$34 million for the Heritage Partnership Program and National Heritage Areas (NHAs). This level would provide funding for each of the 62 individual NHAs in 35 states, as well as NPS administrative support for coordination, guidance, assistance, and training.

Bureau of Land Management: Cultural Resources Management. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) oversees the largest, most diverse, and scientifically important collection of historic and cultural resources on our nation's public lands, as well as the museum collections and data associated with them. The National Trust recommends \$25 million to bolster this program.

The cultural resources program also supports Section 106 review of land-use proposals, Section 110 inventory and protection of cultural resources, compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and consultation with Tribes and Alaska Native Governments. Moving forward, we recommend \$1 million in dedicated funds for the agency to enhance its National Cultural Resources Information Management System (NCRIMS). This collaboration with state historic preservation offices is one of the nation's most innovative programs to support predictive modeling and data analysis to enhance planning for large-scale, cross-jurisdictional land-use projects.

Bureau of Land Management: National Landscape Conservation System. The BLM's National Landscape Conservation System (National Conservation Lands) includes approximately 37 million acres of congressionally and presidentially designated lands, including National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, National Scenic and Historic Trails, and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

We encourage the Committee to provide at least \$78 million to the base program for the National Landscape Conservation System. An increase in funding will allow for greater inventory and monitoring of cultural resources in this growing system, prevent damage to the resources found in these areas, ensure proper management, and provide for a quality visitor experience.

Independent Agencies: National Endowments for the Arts and for the Humanities. We urge the Committee to provide no less than \$211 million each for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). NEA and NEH funding is critical to communities around the country and strengthens our nation by promoting the 'lessons of history' to all Americans. This funding has also supported efforts by the National Trust's Historic Sites and others to tell a fuller American story and engage visitors in compelling ways.

Independent Agencies: Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. We recommend \$10.5 million for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). This increase would enhance the ACHP's ability to perform its essential role in ensuring the nation's historic and cultural resources are protected while also advancing timely delivery of major infrastructure projects and improving consultation with Indian Tribes. The increase would also support the ACHP's efforts to promote enhanced mapping and digitization of cultural resources.

We stand ready to assist the Committee in support of our recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shaw Sprague", is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Shaw Sprague
Vice President of Government Relations
National Trust for Historic Preservation