



**National Trust for
Historic Preservation**
Save the past. Enrich the future.

**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 and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation**

April 4, 2025

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 2026 appropriations. 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. For fiscal year 2026, the National Trust recommends funding within the National Park Service (NPS) under the Department of the Interior. We recommend \$225 million for the Historic Preservation Fund, \$11.75 million for National Networks programs, \$145 million for NPS construction, \$150 million for NPS repair and rehabilitation, \$205 million for cyclic maintenance, \$46 million for Cultural Programs, and \$34 million for the Heritage Partnership Program and National Heritage Areas (NHAs). We also recommend \$10.5 million for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), an independent agency.

Thank you for considering the 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. We offer our gratitude for your longstanding support for preserving America's special places.

Preserving historic places can provide significant economic benefits by attracting tourists, creating jobs, and increasing property values, which in turn generates tax revenue for local governments. Importantly, preservation efforts are an excellent example of a public-private sector partnership through tax credits and grants, ensuring that the financial burden on taxpayers is minimized. Beyond the economic advantages, historic preservation fosters community by maintaining the character and identity of local neighborhoods, allowing future generations to connect with their heritage. Additionally, preserving existing structures is often more cost-effective than new construction, offering long-term savings for communities.

Our annual report, "[The Preservation Budget: Select Preservation Priorities for FY 2026 Appropriations](https://savingplaces.org/preservation-funding-priorities),"¹ includes more information on the programs identified below, including funding levels over time and many remarkable recent examples of program successes.

¹ <https://savingplaces.org/preservation-funding-priorities>

National Park Service: Historic Preservation Fund. The HPF is the principal source of funding to implement the nation’s preservation programs. Sustained investments in the HPF have facilitated innovative and impactful historic preservation work across the country that continues to enrich our communities.

HPF funding supports fundamental preservation activities such as surveys, 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 highlight the extraordinary impact Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants have in fostering economic development in our nation’s rural communities. We would also like to highlight the Semiquincentennial Grants program, which works to protect and preserve historic sites that commemorate the founding of our nation in conjunction with the upcoming 250th birthday celebrations. 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 (SHPOs and THPOs) are at the forefront of protecting our nation’s historic and cultural resources, and the National Trust strongly supports the work of these critical offices.

We respectfully request that Congress provide a total FY 2026 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 African American Civil Rights grants
- \$7 million for the History of Equal Rights Grants program
- \$13 million for grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- \$40 million for Save America’s Treasures grants
- \$17 million for Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grants for rural areas
- \$5 million for Underrepresented Community grants
- \$11 million for Semiquincentennial Grants program

National Park Service: National Networks. The NPS manages five national networks around important themes in American history: African American Civil Rights, the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, the Reconstruction Era, World War II Heritage Cities, and Japanese American World War II History. These programs coordinate preservation, research, and education efforts nationwide across large networks of partners. Please support \$11.75 million to administer and enhance National Networks programs.

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. 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 at least \$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 for Repair and Rehabilitation at \$150 million and maintaining \$205 million for Cyclic Maintenance to ensure routine and emerging needs are appropriately addressed.

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 historic tax credit (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.

The National Trust recommends \$46 million for Cultural Programs for FY 2026. Specifically, we want to highlight our recommendation of \$3 million for the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program, which has been Congressionally authorized since FY 2023, but has yet to receive any appropriated funds to begin this critical work. This program will allow descendant-led and preservation organizations working to protect African American burial grounds to receive funding to preserve these sacred landscapes. Assisting with the discovery of these places of tribute and memory ahead of commercial development will help avoid disturbances of these sacred places and aid family members, descendants, and community members in honoring and remembering their shared past.

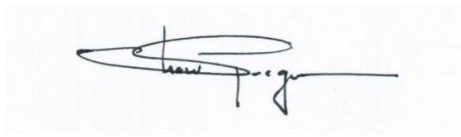
Further increases in this account will support sustained demands to review and approve federal HTC projects and allow improvements to, and a more complete list of, historic and archeological resources in the National Register of Historic Places.

National Park Service: National Heritage Areas. We recommend \$34 million for the Heritage Partnership Program and National Heritage Areas (NHAs). This level of investment would provide the necessary funding for each of the 62 individual NHAs in 36 states, as well as NPS administrative support for coordination, guidance, assistance, and training. NHAs uniquely combine historic preservation, cultural and natural resource conservation, local and regional preservation planning, and heritage education and tourism. According to the NPS, NHAs leverage an average of \$5.50 for every \$1 of federal investment to create jobs, generate local government revenue, and sustain local communities through revitalization tourism.

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 ACHPs 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 black ink, appearing to read "Shaw Sprague", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

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