



**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 Senate
Department of the Interior and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation**

June 14, 2025

Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Merkley, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s funding recommendations for Fiscal Year 2026. The National Trust, a privately funded nonprofit organization chartered by Congress in 1949, works to save the historic places that shape our national identity and enrich the lives of all Americans.

As we approach the 250th anniversary of American Independence in 2026, we have a profound opportunity—and responsibility—to invest in the places that reflect the full breadth and complexity of our nation’s story. The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), administered by the National Park Service, is the federal government’s primary tool for preserving historic and cultural resources in communities across the country. The HPF supports essential programs such as State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, competitive grants to underserved communities, and the preservation of sites that reflect the diversity of the American experience.

For FY 2026, we respectfully recommend robust funding for key preservation programs within the National Park Service, under the Department of the Interior. These investments are essential to protecting America’s diverse cultural and historic resources. We are grateful for the Subcommittee’s longstanding, bipartisan support of historic preservation, and we look forward to working together to ensure America’s heritage is preserved for current and future generations.

Preserving historic places can provide significant economic benefits by attracting heritage tourism, 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](#),”¹ includes more information on the programs identified below, including funding levels over time and many remarkable recent examples of program successes.

¹ National Trust for Historic Preservation, “The Preservation Budget: Select Preservation Priorities for FY 2026 Appropriations”; <https://savingplaces.org/preservation-funding-priorities>

National Park Service: Historic Preservation Fund. The HPF serves as the principal source of federal support for implementing the nation's preservation programs. Consistent and sustained investment in the HPF has enabled innovative and impactful preservation efforts across the country, enriching communities by safeguarding the places that define our shared heritage.

State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs and THPOs) play a critical leadership role in protecting our nation's historic and cultural resources, and the National Trust strongly supports the essential work carried out by these offices. Funding through the HPF enables core preservation activities, including historical surveys, the nomination of properties to the National Register of Historic Places, public education, and the review of projects required for the federal Historic Tax Credit (HTC) program.

We would particularly like to highlight the significant impact of the HPF's competitive grant programs. Among the many competitive grant programs, we would like to underscore some of special interest to the Subcommittee. The Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants promote economic development in rural communities through the rehabilitation of historic properties and downtown districts. Similarly, the Semiquincentennial Grants program supports the preservation of historic sites connected to the founding of our nation, in preparation for the upcoming 250th anniversary of American Independence. A recent example is from Haines, Alaska where the Chilkoot Indian Association received a Save America's Treasures grant for the stabilization and rehabilitation of the Noow Hít tribal house. These competitive grant programs are having a transformative effect in communities across the country. They not only broaden and diversify the historical narrative but also stimulate local economies by revitalizing neighborhoods and supporting job creation.

Accordingly, the National Trust respectfully requests that Congress provide a total appropriation of \$225 million for the Historic Preservation Fund in FY 2026.

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.

Specifically, we want to highlight our recommendation of \$3 million for the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program, which has been 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 investments 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. **The National Trust recommends \$46 million for Cultural Programs for FY 2026.**

Independent Agencies: Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Providing robust investment for the ACHP will enhance their ability to perform essential roles that ensure the nation's historic and cultural resources are protected, while also advancing timely delivery of major infrastructure projects and improving consultation with Tribes. Increased investment would also support the efforts of the ACHP to promote enhanced mapping and digitization of cultural resources, providing more efficient preservation outcomes. **The National Trust recommends \$10.5 million for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP).**

National Park Service: Deferred Maintenance. The NPS is responsible for maintaining a system comprised of more than 430 park units that tell 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 \$150 million for Repair and Rehabilitation and maintaining \$205 million for Cyclic Maintenance to ensure routine and emerging needs are appropriately addressed.

Additionally, we support the bipartisan effort outlined in the America the Beautiful Act (S. 1547), that among other things, extends the Legacy Restoration Fund at \$2 billion annually for eight years, improves opportunities for prioritizing projects with matching funds, and requires additional reporting to Congress. This legislative proposal coupled with sustained investment in NPS deferred maintenance-related accounts for FY 2026 will assist in preservation of iconic historic assets within the National Park System.

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.

For example, the African American Civil Rights Network encompasses NPS units and programs, as well as publicly and privately owned sites and programs that voluntarily apply for inclusion in

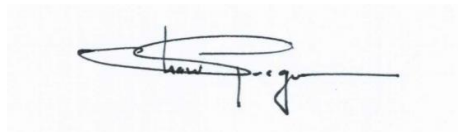
the network. Signed into law by President Trump in January 2018, the African American Civil Rights Network Act authorized a network that features 127 entities related to the African American civil rights movement from 1939 through 1968. Unfortunately, the program authorization lapsed in January 2025. We would appreciate continued support from the subcommittee for this program and its reauthorization. **Please support \$11.75 million to administer and enhance National Networks programs.**

National Park Service: National Heritage Areas. NHAs uniquely combine historic preservation, cultural and natural resource conservation, local and regional preservation planning, and heritage education and tourism. Continued 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. 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. **The National Trust recommends \$34 million for the Heritage Partnership Program and National Heritage Areas (NHAs).**

Additionally, as we approach the final quarter of the federal fiscal year, the continued delay in releasing FY 2025 HPF allocations is placing historic resources nationwide at serious risk. Many SHPOs have exhausted their FY 2024 funding, are struggling to meet their federally mandated responsibilities, and are now being forced to lay off staff to manage budget shortfalls. Immediate distribution of FY 2025 HPF funds is essential to prevent the closure of SHPO offices and the disruption of core programs such as the HTC and the National Register of Historic Places. The longer FY 2025 funding remains unfulfilled, the more it weakens the infrastructure and capacity of preservation offices, compounding the risks posed by any reductions in FY 2026 funding levels. Furthermore, strong Congressional support for FY 2026 HPF funding and reauthorization of the HPF program will reaffirm Congress's longstanding commitment to preserving our nation's heritage. Without this support, we risk losing the very places that define our shared history.

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