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 Senate

May 15, 2026

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

Thank you for the opportunity to share the National Trust for Historic Preservation's recommendations for fiscal year (FY) 2027 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 FY27, the National Trust recommends funding within the National Park Service (NPS) under the Department of the Interior. We recommend $250 million for the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), and at least $46 million for NPS Cultural Programs. Additionally, we recommend $8.585 million for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) and $213 million each for the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities.

We are especially grateful that Congress, on a bipartisan basis, provided robust funding for the HPF in FY26, and we respectfully urge you to reject proposed reductions for FY27 as the nation commemorates its Semiquincentennial. For FY26, Congress enacted $168.9 million for the HPF—an important affirmation of the federal government's longstanding commitment to preserving America's historic resources and supporting the State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs and THPOs) that carry out this work nationwide. We urge Congress to enhance this commitment in FY27 and thank you for your continued leadership and longstanding support for preserving America's historic places, which generate lasting economic, cultural, and civic benefits for communities across the country.

Preserving historic places delivers significant economic returns by attracting tourism, creating jobs, and increasing property values, while generating local tax revenue. Historic preservation is a proven public-private partnership, leveraging federal investment through tools like the Historic Tax Credit (HTC). Beyond economic impact, preservation strengthens community identity, connects future generations to our shared history, and is often more cost-effective than new construction.

National Park Service: Historic Preservation Fund

The HPF is the principal source of funding to implement the nation's historic preservation programs, and sustained investments in the HPF enable impactful preservation work in communities across the country. HPF funding supports core preservation activities, including surveys, National Register nominations, public education, and reviews required for federal HTC projects. 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.

The program also supports transformative competitive grants, including the Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants, which drive economic development in rural communities, and the Save America's Treasures grant program, which preserves nationally significant historic and cultural resources. Through funded projects and community engagement, Save America's Treasures grants enable a richer American history to be told and preserved.

As we commemorate 250 years of American history, Congress has a unique opportunity to match that milestone with a $250 million investment in the HPF—$1 million for every year of our nation's story—to protect the places that bring that history to life. We respectfully request a total FY27 HPF appropriation of **$250 million**. Within that funding, we recommend:

- **$70 million** for SHPOs
- **$34 million** for THPOs
- **$28 million** for African American Civil Rights grants
- **$7 million** for the History of Equal Rights Grants program
- **$13 million** for Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- **$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 the Semiquincentennial Grants program
- **$25 million** for survey and digitization initiatives to support SHPO and THPO efforts to address technology and data gaps, including non-digitized or inaccessible historic property records

The additional $25 million request for targeted investment in survey and digitization of historic and cultural resource records recognizes the urgency of modernizing preservation infrastructure. As Congress considers permitting reform proposals to improve efficiencies of federal undertakings, this funding will help ensure a more complete and inclusive understanding of our nation's resources and enable the preservation for records of our first 250 years, ensuring they are accessible, protected, and usable for the next 250.

National Park Service: Deferred Maintenance

The NPS manages more than 85 million acres of cultural and natural resources across 433 units that include national parks, monuments, battlefields, and historical sites across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories.

For over a decade, the National Trust has worked with our partners to support efforts to address deferred maintenance needs in the National Park System and the extension of the Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) established by the Great American Outdoors Act. Decades of inconsistent funding have resulted in a substantial deferred maintenance backlog of more than $23 billion that threatens historic assets and increases long-term costs.

The National Trust strongly supports the America the Beautiful Act (S. 1547) to extend the LRF and robust investment in the Line Item Construction, Repair and Rehab, and Cyclic Maintenance accounts to address annual needs.

National Park Service: Staffing and Programs

NPS staff provide critical leadership to successfully implement preservation programs that drive economic development and preserve irreplaceable historic and cultural resources in communities and on federal lands nationwide. Since January 2025, NPS staffing reductions of nearly 25% have diminished the ability for the agency to continue high-quality programs and cultural resource protection. We remain concerned about the tremendous loss in capacity and institutional knowledge due to hiring freezes, pressured resignations, insufficient appropriations, and reductions in force.

The National Trust supports robust funding for the Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) account, bill language specifying that staff be hired and retained to restore September 2024 staffing levels, and at least **$46 million** for Cultural Programs.

NPS Cultural Programs support essential preservation functions, including administration of the National Register of Historic Places, the National Historic Landmarks Program, HTC project certification, and federal archaeology programs. Within our request, we highlight the need for **$3 million** for the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program, which has been authorized since FY23, but not yet funded. This program is critical to protecting and honoring historically significant burial sites and supporting descendant-led preservation efforts.

The National Trust also requests support for the following NPS programs:

- The NPS Japanese American Confinement Sites (JACS) Grant Program provides federal funding through a competitive process to preserve and interpret World War II confinement sites so that present and future generations learn the history of Japanese American efforts to protest and resist discrimination, incarceration, direct attacks on their citizenship and human rights, as well as the Nation's commitment to equal justice under the law. The National Trust supports survivor and descendant requests for **$4.655 million**, the same level as FY26 enacted.

- The American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) and its NPS-administered grants enable critical preservation funding and public-private partnerships that support the protection of cultural landscapes interpreting our nation's historic battlefields. The ABPP has protected more than 40,000 acres at battlefields from the Revolution, War of 1812, and the Civil War. The National Trust supports funding of **$20 million** for this program.

- 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. While the African American Civil Rights network is currently unauthorized, we support its reauthorization and funding. We recommend a total of **$11.75 million** to support and enhance these programs.

Support for the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities

We urge support for continued bipartisan support and investment for institutions and programs supporting museums and their impactful contributions in every state nationwide including educating the public, showcasing American culture, fueling economic development, and engaging communities in their exploration of our shared history. According to the recent March GAO report, museums currently face a multitude of challenges including deferred maintenance impacting the preservation of collections, and sustained investment is critical to support American heritage conservation.

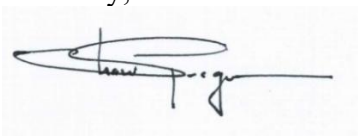
The National Trust supports the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) at **$213 million** each for FY27. These two agencies provide critical funding for museum and other cultural collections, as well as exhibitions and programs that share our nation's rich cultural heritage.

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)

We recommend **$8.585 million** for the ACHP to support its essential role in protecting historic resources, advancing infrastructure project delivery, and strengthening consultation with Tribes.

As the nation commemorates its 250th anniversary, this is a pivotal moment to reaffirm our commitment to preserving the places that define the American story. Strategic investments in historic preservation programs protect our shared heritage, strengthen communities, fuel local economies, and ensure that future generations inherit a richer, more complete understanding of our past. We respectfully urge the Committee to advance these recommendations and stand ready to assist the Committee in support of preserving America's historic places.

Sincerely,



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