



*Preserving America's Heritage*

## **TESTIMONY FOR THE RECORD**

**SUBMITTED BY JOHN L. NAU, III  
CHAIRMAN, ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

**TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS,  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
THE HONORABLE RAUL M. GRIJALVA, CHAIRMAN**

**HEARING ON THE  
PRESERVE AMERICA AND SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURES ACT (H.R. 3981)**

**APRIL 24, 2008**

### **SUMMARY STATEMENT**

The Preserve America and Save America's Treasures Act (H.R. 3981) would provide legislative authorization for two existing programs that are important sources of support for the preservation and productive use of our nation's historic properties. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), an independent federal agency, has been a leader in administering the Preserve America program over the five years of its existence. We can attest to the success of Preserve America in helping communities across the nation. Preserve America, with its emphasis on public-private partnerships to promote heritage tourism and economic vitality through historic preservation, complements the work of the Save America's Treasures Program, which helps to fund the rehabilitation and conservation of America's most significant historic resources. The ACHP supports H.R. 3981, since legislative authorization will ensure the continued existence of these important programs.

### **BACKGROUND**

Title II of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) established the ACHP. NHPA charges the ACHP with advising the President and the Congress on historic preservation matters and entrusts the ACHP with the unique mission of advancing historic preservation within the federal government and the national historic preservation program. The ACHP's authority and responsibilities are principally derived from the NHPA.

The ACHP plays a pivotal role in the national historic preservation program. Founded as a unique partnership among federal, state, and local governments, Indian tribes, and the public to advance the preservation of America's heritage while recognizing contemporary needs, the partnership has matured

and expanded over time. The ACHP promotes consistency in federal preservation efforts and assists federal agencies in meeting their preservation responsibilities.

The ACHP also plays a key role in shaping historic preservation policy and programs at the highest levels of the Administration. In that capacity, the ACHP created an initiative for the White House designed to stimulate creative partnerships among all levels of government and the private sector to preserve and actively use historic resources for a better appreciation of America's history and diversity. The initiative is known as Preserve America.

The components of Preserve America complement the work of the Save America's Treasures program. Save America's Treasures grants fund preservation and/or conservation work on nationally significant intellectual and cultural artifacts and historic structures and sites. The Preserve America and Save America's Treasures Act (H.R. 3981) would provide legislative authorization for both the Preserve America initiative and the Save America's Treasures program.

### **PRESERVE AMERICA**

First Lady Laura Bush, Honorary Chair of Preserve America, announced the Preserve America initiative on March 3, 2003. On the same day, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13287, "Preserve America," to improve federal stewardship of historic properties and to foster recognition of such properties as national assets to be used for economic, educational, and other purposes.

Preserve America encourages and supports community efforts to preserve and enjoy our priceless cultural and natural heritage. The goals of the initiative include a greater shared knowledge about the nation's past, strengthened regional identities and local pride, increased local participation in preserving the country's cultural and natural heritage assets, and support for the economic vitality of our communities. Preserve America promotes these objectives through the following:

- ***Recognition programs:*** The ACHP administers the Preserve America Communities program (discussed in detail below) and the Preserve America Presidential Awards program. Through the Presidential Awards program, four awards are given annually to organizations, businesses, and government entities for exemplary accomplishments in the sustainable use and preservation of cultural or natural heritage assets; demonstrated commitment to the protection and interpretation of America's cultural or natural heritage assets; and integration of these assets into contemporary community life.
- ***Financial assistance for local communities:*** The National Park Service manages the Preserve America Grants program (discussed in detail below).
- ***Educational outreach:*** The Preserve America History Teacher of the Year Award, established by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, recognizes outstanding American history teachers and the crucial importance of American history education. As Honorary Chair of Preserve America, First Lady Laura Bush has presented this annual award.
- ***Preserve America Summit:*** To celebrate the 40th anniversary of passage of the NHPA, the ACHP convened the Preserve America Summit in October 2006. With First Lady Laura Bush as the keynote speaker, more than 450 invited participants gathered to consider historic preservation's past and future. Based on issues discussed at the Summit, the ACHP issued recommendations on actions the federal government should take to promote continued growth and improvement in the federal preservation program, and enhanced use and appreciation of America's invaluable heritage assets.

The ACHP is working with federal and non-federal partners to advance implementation of these recommendations.

- ***Executive Order 13287, “Preserve America”***: The Preserve America Executive Order mandates a number of actions that are intended to encourage better accountability for the use of federally owned historic properties. Every three years, each agency with real property management responsibilities must prepare and submit to the ACHP and the Secretary of the Interior a report detailing the progress the agency has made in identifying, protecting, and using historic properties in its ownership. Based on these reports, the ACHP prepares a report to the President on the state of the federal government’s historic properties and their contribution to local economic development.

The ACHP co-chairs (with the Department of the Interior) a Preserve America Steering Committee comprised of 13 departments and agencies.<sup>1</sup> In coordination with the White House, the Preserve America Steering Committee identifies policy needs and oversees the initiative. At the operational level, ACHP staff works with partner federal agencies and others as appropriate to carry out specific Preserve America activities.

### **Preserve America Communities**

H.R. 3981 would codify the current process for designating Preserve America Communities. The ACHP, in cooperation with the National Park Service, administers the Preserve America Community program. Designation recognizes communities that protect and celebrate their local heritage. Communities eligible to apply include municipalities, counties, Indian tribes, and neighborhoods in large cities. Since the program began, Mrs. Bush has designated 608 communities in all 50 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Preserve America Communities use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs. To be designated, an applicant community must demonstrate that it recently supported a historic or cultural preservation project that promotes heritage tourism or fosters economic vitality and which involves a public/private partnership. The community also must indicate its commitment to the preservation of heritage assets and meet criteria within three broad categories: discovering heritage through historic places, protecting historic resources, and promoting historic assets.

Currently designated Preserve America Communities are richly varied. Some are iconic historic places, like New Orleans, Gettysburg, and Williamsburg. Some are major metropolitan areas, such as Philadelphia, Phoenix, and Washington’s King County. In contrast, Preserve America Communities can also be small, like Bramwell, West Virginia, (population about 400) a coal town that has reinvented itself as a heritage tourism destination in the National Coal Heritage Area.

Neighborhoods in large cities can apply to become Preserve America Communities, and the 14 designated to date are diverse. Among them are Honolulu’s Chinatown Historic District, San Diego’s Little Italy, and The District, the historic heart of Nashville, Tennessee. Counties are also eligible for designation. Among those designated are six rural counties in southeastern Colorado—Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero,

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<sup>1</sup> Federal agencies represented on the Preserve America Steering Committee are the ACHP; the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, and Transportation; the General Services Administration; the Institute for Museum and Library Services; the National Endowment for the Humanities; the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities; and the President’s Council on Environmental Quality.

and Prowers Counties—that became Preserve America Communities as part of a regional strategy to promote heritage tourism and economic revitalization.

Indian tribes as well as Native Alaskan villages and corporations are also eligible to become Preserve America Communities. Two have applied to date, resulting in designation of the White Mountain Apache Tribe and St. George Island in Alaska's Pribilof Islands.

Designation as a Preserve America Community provides national recognition for the grass-roots efforts of communities both to preserve their heritage and to use it in support of their economic vitality. In addition to intangible benefits such as enhanced community visibility and pride, Preserve America Community designation also makes communities eligible for Preserve America Grants.

### **Preserve America Grants**

H.R. 3981 would provide legislative authorization for the existing Preserve America Grant Program. Since 2006, Congress has appropriated almost \$17 million for Preserve America Grants. Administered by the National Park Service, in cooperation with the ACHP, these grants offer a new type of federal preservation funding that supports heritage tourism initiatives, promotion/marketing programs, and interpretive/educational initiatives.

While other programs address physical rehabilitation, Preserve America Grants provide critically needed up-front planning and associated assistance to communities looking for ways to preserve their local heritage in a self-sustaining manner. No other federal funding program has this specific focus. Preserve America Grants support planning, development, implementation, or enhancement of innovative activities and programs in heritage tourism, including interpretation/education, planning, marketing, training, and research/documentation of cultural resources. Funded projects involve public-private partnerships and serve as models to communities nationwide for heritage tourism, historic preservation, education, and economic development.

Preserve America Grants are awarded through a competitive process. Grants require a dollar-for-dollar, non-federal match, which can be cash, donated services, or use of equipment. Eligible recipients are designated Preserve America Communities; Certified Local Governments<sup>2</sup> that have applied for Preserve America Community designation; State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs); and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs). The minimum grant request is \$20,000 federal share (resulting in a total project cost of \$40,000). The maximum grant request for any project is \$250,000 (resulting in a total project cost of \$500,000).

Communities from Anchorage, Alaska, to the historic textile center of Gastonia, North Carolina, have received grants to develop multi-faceted marketing campaigns—using wayfinding signs, walking tour brochures, Web sites and other materials—to promote themselves as heritage and cultural tourism destinations. Other communities are using Preserve America Grants to plan for the reuse of historic properties for heritage tourism. For example, Tooele County, Utah, received a Preserve America Grant to develop interpretive material and to initiate master planning for preserving Wendover Airfield, training base of the Enola Gay crew that dropped the first atomic bomb in 1945.

Twenty-five SHPOs have received Preserve America Grants. Some, like Arkansas and South Carolina, have established subgrant programs to assist local communities in promoting heritage tourism. Others,

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<sup>2</sup> A Certified Local Government (CLG) is a community whose local preservation program has been certified by their State Historic Preservation Officer as meeting established standards for the protection of historic properties. CLGs are eligible to receive a portion of the federal Historic Preservation Fund funding provided to the states.

including Montana and Wyoming, are using Preserve America Grants to fund preservation and heritage tourism training for local communities. Preserve America Grants to West Virginia and Texas will help develop and support thematic and regional heritage tourism trails.

Some SHPO grant recipients are focusing their efforts on specific historic properties. For example, Pennsylvania is creating a living history program to increase the visibility of Underground Railroad and Civil War resources in several counties, while Georgia has launched a campaign to protect and interpret the state's historic cemeteries. Several states—Arkansas, Colorado, Kentucky, Montana, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania—are using Preserve America Grant funds for survey and planning initiatives aimed at revitalizing rural areas through heritage tourism.

Preserve America Grants do not fund “bricks and mortar” rehabilitation of historic resources, but rather their productive continued preservation and use. Thus, the program complements rather than duplicates other federal funding programs, including Save America's Treasures.

### **SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURES**

H.R. 3981 would provide legislative authorization for the Save America's Treasures program, which was created in 1998 as a Millennium initiative. The program has evolved to become one of the largest and most successful sources of federal funding for historic preservation. Since FY 1999, 967 grants (469 earmarks and 498 competitive grants) totaling \$264.5 million have been awarded. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Midway Island have received grants.

Save America's Treasures funds preservation and/or conservation work on nationally significant intellectual and cultural artifacts, and historic structures and sites. Intellectual and cultural artifacts include artifacts, collections, documents, sculpture, and works of art. Historic structures and sites include historic districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects. Reflecting the scope of the program, Save America's Treasures grants have helped to conserve both the Star-Spangled Banner and the house in Baltimore where the flag was created, as well as the original draft of the national anthem it inspired.

Federal, state, local, and tribal government entities, and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for the competitive matching-grant component of the program. A dollar-for-dollar, non-federal match is required. The minimum grant request for collections projects is \$25,000; the minimum grant request for historic property projects is \$125,000. The maximum grant request for all projects is \$700,000.

First Lady Laura Bush is the Honorary Chair of Save America's Treasures. The grant program is administered by the National Park Service in partnership with the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Collaborating on the selection and oversight of the grants are the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is the program's private partner, and its fundraising efforts help projects secure the required private match.

Save America's Treasures has been instrumental in helping to preserve some of America's most significant historic resources. Many are associated with famous Americans, like Taliesin West in Scottsdale, Arizona, home and studio of architect Frank Lloyd Wright, and Thomas Edison's letters and lab notes at the Edison National Historic Site in New Jersey. Others are places where uniquely important historic events occurred, from Fort Ticonderoga in New York, site of important 18<sup>th</sup>-century battles, to the Manhattan Project Buildings in Los Alamos, New Mexico, birthplace of the atom bomb. Architecturally significant properties receiving grants run the gamut from ancient sites like the Puebloan ruins in Utah's

Cedar Mesa and Grand Gulch areas, to important 20th century properties like the Liberty Theatre in Astoria, Oregon, which is one of the best examples of a motion picture palace in the Pacific Northwest.

#### **CONCLUSION**

For five years and 10 years, respectively, Preserve America and Save America's Treasures have evolved to provide vitally needed support for the preservation and productive use of our nation's heritage assets. Across the country, in communities large and small, these programs have a proven track record of supporting heritage tourism, and the rehabilitation and conservation of historic resources. We hope the Subcommittee will favorably consider H.R. 3981, which will provide the legislative authorization needed to ensure the future continuance of Preserve America and Save America's Treasures.

We appreciate the Subcommittee's interest in these issues, and thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to present our views.