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*Preserving America's Heritage*

## **Department of Energy's Weatherization and Energy Efficiency Program Grants Get Innovative Streamlining from Federal and State Historic Preservation Officials**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Seeking to get American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to work as quickly as possible while safeguarding historic properties and relieving a potential increased burden on State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs), federal and state officials rapidly created a streamlined process that accomplishes all three priorities.

Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), federal agencies must consider the impact of their undertakings and actions upon certain categories of historic properties in a proactive manner. The sudden availability of funding for three important weatherization grant programs administered by the Department of Energy's Office of Weatherization and Intergovernmental Programs (OWIP) threatened to overwhelm the ability of SHPOs to efficiently conduct Section 106 reviews without slowing important ARRA projects.

The Department of Energy (DOE), working with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) which administers the Section 106 process for the federal government, and in coordination with the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO), solved these concerns through creation of a prototype Programmatic Agreement (PA).

The prototype PA allows state agencies administering OWIP to expedite historic preservation reviews and thereby obligate ARRA funding quickly. Through execution of a prototype PA, DOE and state agencies will be able to evidence their completion of historic preservation reviews, which is a requirement for state agencies to obligate funds for individual projects. More importantly, the PA allows DOE and state agencies, with the concurrence of SHPOs, to fast track reviews by exempting routine cases from review. Since the prototype PA is a template, state agencies and SHPOs can further tailor the provisions to meet unique circumstances presented by historic properties located within the state.

The three DOE grant programs involved are the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant, the State Energy Plan, and the Weatherization Assistance Program.

The ACHP officially notified Secretary of Energy Steven Chu of the resolution of the potential issue in a letter on February 8 from ACHP Chairman John L. Nau, III.

"We appreciate DOE's cooperation and ongoing support of historic preservation initiatives," Nau said.

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