



Preserving America's Heritage

November 24, 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Senator Cantwell:

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) wishes to express its strong support for the National Park Service Centennial Act (S. 2257/H.R. 3556). Established by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the ACHP is the independent federal agency charged with advising the President and Congress on historic preservation matters.

The National Park Service (NPS) manages some of America's most iconic historic properties. The ACHP has long supported adequate funding for NPS and innovative management and programming by the agency. S. 2257 offers a wide range of well-conceived options consistent with those goals. The bill proposes further funding for critical infrastructure projects, leveraging public-private donations and partnerships, and expanding volunteer and job opportunities in national parks and historic sites. These are certainly appropriate strategies to memorialize NPS' centennial, and a fitting way to address the ongoing needs and future challenges surrounding the care of our national patrimony.

In addition and importantly, while the bulk of the bill addresses management of the National Park System, it also acknowledges the value of NPS's partnership programs. Through these programs, NPS provides technical assistance and funding to non-federal entities, support that is critical to the functioning of the federal-state-tribal-local preservation partnership that has developed since the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act fifty years ago. Such programs include: Historic Preservation Fund grants to State and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers; the National Register of Historic Places; the National Historic Landmarks Program; rehabilitation preservation tax credit certification; the National Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act program; the National Heritage Area Program; Tribal Heritage Grants; and other heritage grant programs. S. 2257 includes a "Centennial Declaration" in Section 101 that would codify the agency's responsibility for such financial and technical assistance programs, and direct the Secretary of the Interior to use such programs to benefit the public. The ACHP supports NPS's partnership programs, many of which are central to the operation of the national preservation program, and applauds inclusion of this provision in the bill.

There is an omission in Section 101, however, that merits clarification. Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations are not included in the list of recipients in Section 101, although several NPS partnership programs assist them. Based on discussions with NPS, the ACHP certainly has no reason to believe that this was a deliberate omission. Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations are key players in the

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federal preservation program. Resolving their omission in Section 101 – and also in a list of non-federal parties in Section 901 of the bill – is vital.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions, or if the ACHP can be of any assistance during consideration of S. 2257. Our Executive Director, John M. Fowler, can be reached at jfowler@achp.gov or 202-517-0200.

Sincerely,



Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA
Chairman