

**Introductory Remarks
Rep. Nick Rahall
National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 2005
July 26, 2005**

Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to reauthorize two important aspects of the National Historic Preservation Act. Specifically, my legislation will authorize deposits into the Historic Preservation Fund through 2011 and will permanently authorize funding for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. In effect, we are extending authority for the money and expertise necessary for the Historic Preservation Act to continue fulfilling its purpose.

Allowing the Act to continue fulfilling its purpose is critical. As Americans, we revere our past. The individuals, cultures, institutions and events which precede our arrival at this place and time provide insight not only into who we are today, but also who we aspire to be tomorrow. This is true for the brief 229-year history of this nation, the 513-year history of Europeans in North America, and it is especially true for the tens of thousands of years of Native American history on this land.

Preserving this rich tapestry of cultures and traditions requires coordination of federal, state, local and private efforts. And the centerpiece of federal historic preservation is the National Historic Preservation Act. Enacted in 1966, the Act provides an array of tools, as well as a funding source, which are central to preserving that which came before us.

One of those tools is the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The Council has two important roles under the Act. One is to assist the Secretary of the Interior in cataloguing and preserving known historic resources through the National Register of Historic Places and other programs. In addition, the Council assists all federal agencies in avoiding damaging or destroying historic resources through consultation under the Act. The Council is not empowered to control agency decision-making or federal property.

Last reauthorized for five years in 2000, the Council is made up of Agency heads and Presidential appointees with diverse backgrounds. My legislation recognizes the critical importance of the Council by providing it permanent authorization while also making several technical changes in the Council's make-up and operation.

In addition, this bill will authorize deposits into the Historic Preservation Fund for the next six years. The Fund is administered by the National Park Service and provides matching grants to states and territories for a variety of historic preservation programs including statewide historic preservation surveys and preservation plans. The Fund also provides matching grants to Indian Tribes, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians and Historically Black Colleges and Universities for cultural heritage projects and the preservation of historic structures.

The source for the Historic Preservation Fund is a small percentage of the enormous revenues generated by oil and gas development in the Outer Continental Shelf. This legislation would allow that funding to continue flowing into the Fund through 2011.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that we can move forward quickly on this legislation to allow the Council and the Fund to continue working. This legislation is nearly identical to a companion bill in the Senate as well as legislation introduced in the previous Congress which received the support of the Advisory Council, the National Park Service, and the Historic Preservation Community.

These are vital programs serving to preserve and protect the story of America and its people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.