



April 15, 2015

Dear Friends,

We write to you today with deep concern over the future of historic preservation in Illinois and all the educational and economic benefits it provides. We're hoping you'll lend your voices to saving the state's preservation programs.

Undoubtedly you have seen news stories about significant budget cuts being proposed for state government next year. You may not have seen details about the devastating proposal for the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

The agency would be eliminated as of July 1, the day it turns 30 years old. Many of its duties would be transferred to the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. It's not yet clear whether all of IHPA's programs would survive. Everything is in flux right now and could quickly change, for good or bad.

Under one proposal, the Historic Sites Division would see a 25 percent cut in staffing. It seems inevitable that sites would remain on a reduced schedule and some might close.

Governor Rauner and the General Assembly have a difficult task in trying to deal with the state's financial problems, but IHPA's tiny budget is not the place to cut. Last year, IHPA's historic sites generated about \$181 million in economic activity and \$12.5 million in state and local tax revenue. They pay for themselves many times over.

If the current plan is approved, historic sites would be a section within a division within an agency that has no particular interest or expertise in history. How much attention will the sites, particularly the smaller ones, receive from DCEO?

Our Preservation Services Division faces a much worse fate. Its funding would be cut by half, leaving just eight employees. It's hard to understand how the division could continue to operate in any meaningful way. This is a division that contributes enormously to the state economy. It helped private developers qualify for federal tax credits on \$1.3 billion worth of construction projects last year – the best record in the nation. It reviews thousands of tax-supported construction projects each year and works with communities on protecting historic buildings and using them to boost the economy.

On top of these changes, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum would be set up as an independent agency, despite the recommendations from a panel of experts who

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considered the issue last fall. It will receive a 20 percent budget cut. That means its very limited dollars would be spent on hiring people to do the administrative work (payroll, human resources, legal and so on) now provided by IHPA staff. It is hard to understand this logic.

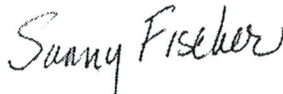
The foundations and friend groups that support our sites contribute enormously to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. Your hard work keeps our sites lively and vibrant for visitors, and everyone at IHPA is grateful.

We felt you deserved to know what has been proposed for IHPA and how it might affect the sites you love and local economies in your communities. If, like us, you think these changes would be a mistake, please speak up. Contact your local legislators. Tell your mayors and business leaders what's at stake. Call the governor's office.

The state's decision-makers must understand that their constituents value IHPA's work. If they don't, the agency will celebrate its 30th anniversary on July 1 and simultaneously close its doors.

Sincerely,


Illinois Historic Preservation Agency Board of Trustees



Sunny Fischer, Chair



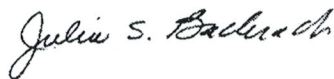
Gary Hammons



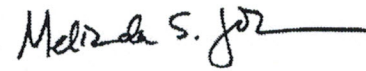
Dan Arnold, Vice Chair



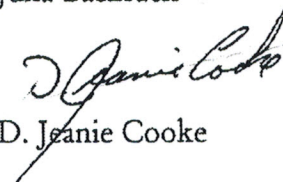
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