

Historic Barn Preservation Program Appropriations FY 2005

Funding for America's Historic Agricultural Resources

Status:

The Farm Security Act of 2002 (PL 107-171), signed into law on May 13, 2002, contained the Historic Barn Preservation Program designed to preserve and restore America's unique and rapidly disappearing landscape of historic agricultural buildings. The Act authorizes "such sums as may be necessary to carry out this section for fiscal years 2002 through 2007." Although twenty Senators signed a letter to support an initial \$5 million appropriation in FY '03 it was not included in the omnibus plan passed in January. The Senate Agriculture Appropriations bill for FY '04 included \$2 million for the program, but funding was eliminated when the House and Senate bills were conferenced.

The Need:

Thousands of barns and other agricultural buildings have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places and thousands more are eligible. Unfortunately, these landmarks of our rural heritage are being lost at an alarming rate. Neglect, decline in the viability of the rural economy, and maintenance and repair challenges faced by owners, prompt hundreds of requests each year for aid. The Historic Barn Preservation Program was created to serve as a catalyst for barn preservation and reuse of all kinds whether to stabilize an existing building for continued agriculture use, restore a structure so that it can be used for another economically productive activity, or the survey and documentation of historic barns so that they can be incorporated into heritage tourism plans. In all cases, preservation and reuse of barns serves as an economic engine in rural areas.

The Program:

1. A five year (FY 2002 to FY 2007) authorization to support grants and programs.
2. Eligible barns must be at least 50 years old, retain sufficient integrity, and meet criteria for listing on national, state or local registers or inventories.
3. The program will be administered by the Agriculture Department's Undersecretary for Rural Development. States and non-profits can apply for grants.
4. Funds can be used to survey historic barns or to create educational programs relating to their history, construction, maintenance, rehabilitation, and contribution to society.
5. Grants are also available for rehabilitation, repair, fire protection, vandalism prevention, research and identification.