

Presidential Sites Improvement Act H.R. 927, S.431

Using America's Historic Sites to Teach America's History

Status:

In the 109th Congress, a bill to establish a program to award grants to improve and maintain non-federally owned sites honoring Presidents of the United States was re-introduced in the House on February 17, 2005. Representatives Paul Gillmor (R-OH) and Mike Ross (D-AR) introduced the Presidential Sites Improvement Act, H.R. 927, with seven original cosponsors. A companion bill, S.431, was re-introduced in the Senate on the same day by Senators Mike DeWine (R-OH) and Richard Durbin (D-IL).

The Need:

Hundreds of sites honoring American Presidents are located throughout the United States and include birthplaces, homes, museums, burial sites and tombs. Most are owned, operated and maintained by non-federal entities such as State and local agencies, family foundations, colleges and universities, libraries, historical societies, historic preservation organizations and other non-profits organizations. Although such sites are integral to understanding the history of the United States, many are in desperate need of capital, technological, and interpretive improvements. This bill extends much needed matching funds to assist the stewards of these sites to ensure that they remain viable, attractive and accessible places for education and commemoration.

The Program:

1. Funds will made available for repairs and capital improvements, the installation or repair of heating or conditioning systems, security systems or electric service, modifications that achieve compliance with the American with Disabilities Act, and interpretive improvements to enhance public understanding and enjoyment of the site.
2. Of the annual funds appropriated, 15% shall be used for emergency projects as determined by the Secretary of the Interior; 65 % shall be used for Presidential sites with a 3-year average annual operating budget of less than \$700,000; and 20% shall be used for grants to Presidential sites with a 3-year average annual operating budget of more than \$700,000.
3. All grants shall be matched 50%.
4. The Act creates a Presidential Sites Grant Commission to review applications and recommend to the Secretary of the Interior projects for which grants should be awarded. The Commission will be made up of the Director of the National Parks Service, four members appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, a State Historic Preservation Officer, a representative of the National Trust and two representatives from Presidential sites.

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