

Weekly Legislative Update for State Historic Preservation Offices

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Recess Round Up

Congress is now in the midst of wrapping up for the summer recess. August is an excellent time for in district lobbying! Contact your local office today to set up a meeting with your legislators. Go here for your Congressman's website, and their local contact info:

<http://www.house.gov>

<http://www.senate.gov>

(Scroll to the end of this update for the latest Congressional Report Card to see what your delegation has supported. Contact NCSHPO or Preservation Action's office for more information about targeted messaging to your member of Congress.)

1. Housing Tax Bill Signed into Law, Includes Rehabilitation Credit Improvements

On July 29, 2008, H.R. 3221, The American Housing Rescue and Foreclosure Prevention Act was signed into law. The housing reform bill includes language improving federal incentives for rehabilitating historic buildings. One break for rehabilitation projects: a repeal of Alternative Minimum Tax limitations on the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit (FRTC). The bill also proscribes that energy efficiency and historic nature be taken into account when the federal government considers allocations of credits among projects. The bill also improves current tax law supporting tax-exempt use in rehabilitation tax credit projects. The legislation increases the percentage of tax-exempt activity allowable in tax credit projects -- from 35% to 50%.

The Community Restoration and Revitalization Act (H.R.1043/S.584), a bill of amendments to the FRTC program, was not substantially included in the housing bill as preservationists had initially hoped. How H.R.1043/S.584's ideas will be reintroduced in the next Congress remains a question. With Congress set to adjourn completely on September 26, we will likely have to wait until next year to see more improvements to federal tax policy supporting historic preservation.

Advocates should be optimistic, however. The next Congress's focus on energy conservation policy will provide a great opportunity to talk about the integral relationship between adaptive reuse, community building and resource conservation.

2. Support For the Midwest Through the Community Development Block Grant Program

Although additional Historic Preservation Fund support was not included in the second Senate supplemental introduced on July 30th, 1.82 billion was included to be appropriated for rehabilitation of homes and buildings, repair and replacement of public facilities and debris removal. In the Gulf Coast, the CDBG program was the

primary federal vehicle for distributing funds. Historic preservation is one of the programs "allowable uses." NCSHPO and Preservation Action will keep you posted on the details of this supplemental, and how federal funding will be directed to historic buildings and property owners in need.

3. Reid's Mega-Bus Blocked, Preserve America, Save America's Treasures Legislation Questioned This Congress.

Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) blocked Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's (D-NV) effort to pass a "mega-bus" bill that folded together a number of legislative ideas from a number of Congressional committees. Land and resource bills were not included in Reid's "mega-bus." Close to a hundred natural resource bills remain in an Interior omnibus, S.3213, that includes authorization of the Preserve America and Save America's Treasures programs.

Disparities between the Senate bill and its House companion may delay the Interior omnibus's passing. Given there are now only four weeks left for Congressional votes, the authorization of these programs may have to wait until the next Congress to be authorized.

<http://www.preservationaction.org/states/7.25.2008report%20card.htm>