

Weekly Legislative Update for State Historic Preservation Offices

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1. FY2009 SPENDING BILLS ANTICIPATED FOR PRESIDENT-ELECT OBAMA'S APPROVAL IN JANUARY

Given the scope of work facing the new Congress and the Obama Administration, democrats plan to complete work on a FY2009 fiscal omnibus in the first week of the 111th Congress. FY2009 spending is now being supported by a continuing resolution until March 6.

The possibility of a change in party leadership in the White House helped delay FY2009 spending decisions. The Congressional elections, disaster response, and the nation's financial crisis monopolized legislators time -- as did debates about off shore oil lease revenue. President-elect Barack Obama has not yet agreed to the expedited plan.

"We hope to have all of our appropriations bills put together and be voted on early in January and sent to President Obama on his first day in office," Tom Harkin (D-IA) the chairman of the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee told Congressional Quarterly earlier this week.

Nine appropriations bills, including Interior which funds the core historic preservation programs, were not cleared in the current Congress.

Preservation advocates should reach out to their members of Congress about Historic Preservation Fund programs while members are back in their districts. HPF programs include State Historic Preservation Offices (\$50 million requested), Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (\$20 million requested), Save America's Treasures (\$30 million requested) and Preserve America (\$10 million requested).

Related information, the National Academy of Public Administration's report on the federal preservation program, which makes a strong case for increasing HPF program spending:

<http://www.ncshpo.org/PDFs/NAPA/NAPA%20Report%20on%20HPF.pdf>

2. NCSHPO STAFF MEETS U.S. HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER, REP. STENY HOYER (D-MD)

Friday morning NCSHPO staff, Nancy Schamu, Elizabeth Belleville and Kristen Harbeson attended a client breakfast honoring U.S. House Majority Leader, Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD), hosted by Alexander & Cleaver law firm of Annapolis.

At the event, Majority Leader Hoyer summarized the 2008 election results and the issues he expects the House of Representatives will address during the first session of the 111th Congress. Rep. Hoyer said the first major piece of legislation will be a continuance of a stimulus package which will focus on 1) unemployment benefits 2) food stamps 3) Medicare/Medicaid and 4) funding for States to address infrastructure needs. He also said healthcare reform and climate change legislation will be forefront on the agenda as well.

Rep. Hoyer also expects congress will reconvene for a few days the week of December 8th to debate auto industry bailout legislation. When asked by NCSHPO about timing of the FY09 appropriations, Hoyer responded that Congress will address all outstanding appropriations bills, including Interior, in January.

3. PRESERVE AMERICA AND SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURES LEGISLATION PUT OFF UNTIL NEXT CONGRESS

The Preserve America and Save America's Treasures programs will not be authorized this Congress. The lame duck session did not provide enough time to overcome procedural objections to an omnibus public lands bill that included the legislation. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has been quoted as saying that "we're better off waiting until we come back." He said the bill would be taken up in January when the Senate returns.

Tom Coburn (R-OK), the bill's primary opponent, threatened a filibuster -- reading the bill in its entirety to delay or prevent action. According to Senator Reid, the bill would take 24 hours or more to read in full.

The authorizing legislation, originally H.R. 3981/S.2262 had significant bipartisan support. 58 Representatives and 8 Senators cosponsored the bill prior to its being folded into the lands omnibus.