

## Weekly Legislative Update for State Historic Preservation Offices

December 5, 2008 | Volume II | Number 40

### 1. OBAMA'S "OPEN GOVERNMENT" OPENS DOORS FOR GRASSROOTS ADVOCATES

#### 2. VACANT BUILDINGS LEGISLATION DISCUSSED – WITH HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROVISIONS

#### 3. SECRETARY OF INTERIOR'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

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### I. OBAMA'S "OPEN GOVERNMENT" OPENS DOORS FOR GRASSROOTS ADVOCATES

On Tuesday, December 2, President Elect Barack Obama addressed a group of governors and called for collaboration and innovation among governments to pull the nation out of an economic recession. In his speech, he noted that economic constraints are forcing state and local governments to make difficult decisions – having to choose between raising taxes and reducing services and programs. Obama pointed to potential historic site closings as one negative outcome. The comment immediately sparked grassroots activity.

The Obama-Biden transition team has significantly improved connections between the grassroots and the Administration even before entering office. Grassroots activists now have an opportunity to reach out in direct response to his speech, and with general ideas and concerns.

The team has created a website, [www. change.gov](http://www.change.gov) that allows citizens to connect directly with the incoming Administration through a "Tell Your Story" feature. Obama's history-friendly comments to governors prompted the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Offices to send a message to its listserv about the speech comments, and encouraged members to reach out through the interactive feature to support local historic sites and historic preservation. The NCSHPO connected with other national groups to do the same.

To reach out to the Obama-Biden transition team, go to:

<http://www.change.gov>

### 2. VACANT BUILDINGS LEGISLATION DISCUSSED – WITH HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROVISIONS

The problem of vacant buildings in urban areas reached a boiling point earlier this year, but increased Congressional interest did not result in new legislation in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. The 111<sup>th</sup> Congress will have an opportunity, early on, to reconsider the issue.

Congressman Tim Ryan's (D-OH) is now in the process of drafting vacant buildings legislation that would support historic preservation efforts in cities nationwide, though program funds would also be used for demolition of vacant properties. The draft clearly states that demolition of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places or any property designated under state or local law unless designation is waived by historic preservation officials after public review.

His office is seeking input from the grassroots on “The Renaissance Communities Act of 2009.” The Act sets up a demonstration program focused on areas with at least 10% population loss since 1980. Adaptive reuse of “architectural, historically or culturally significant properties is an eligible expense.

The draft legislation does not proscribe how much funding would be authorized for this program.

A PDF version of the draft legislation is available here:

<http://www.preservationaction.org/RC%20Act%20Draft%2010%2027%2008.pdf>

Comments on the program draft should be directed to Steve Cerny in Congressman Ryan’s office: [Steve.Cerny@mail.house.gov](mailto:Steve.Cerny@mail.house.gov)

### 3. SECRETARY OF INTERIOR’S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

On December 4, 2008, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne awarded Calder Loth, Senior Architectural Historian, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the Historic Preservation Award in the State Historic Preservation Office category. Calder started at the Virginia SHPO office in 1968. He has worked for four decades on researching Virginia's architectural history including responsibility for publications and easements. Current SHPO Kathleen Kilpatrick and former SHPO and former NCSHPO President Bryan Mitchell attended the ceremony in the Secretary's office.

Other awards went to William Morgan, Muncie, Indiana, Certified Local Government category, Deborah Corbett, Forest Service, Alaska, Federal Preservation Office category and Kelly Jackson, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Wisconsin, in the Tribal Historic Preservation Office category.

Secretary Kempthorne initiated these awards to recognize outstanding achievement in among the historic preservation partners under the National Historic Preservation act pursuant to Section 110(h) of the Act (1980 Amendments).



Calder Loth receives his award from Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne