

News!

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LET THE 111TH CONGRESS BEGIN!

Congress Returns to Session

On January 6th, 2009 the 111th Congress started their first session. Tuesday was spent swearing in 56 new Representatives and 9 new Senators. Due to a dispute over the Minnesota Senate election results, neither incumbent Senator Norm Coleman (R) nor his challenger, Al Franken (D), were sworn in. Roland Burris, Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich's nominee to replace President-elect Obama, is also still awaiting approval by the Senate.

Congressional Agenda Outlook

The first legislative priority for House and Senate leadership is passing an economic stimulus package. Congressional leadership met with President-elect Obama on Monday to discuss the make-up of the stimulus package. While not yet complete, Obama indicated that tax cuts for households and business tax credits would represent about 40 percent of the total cost of his stimulus plan. His plan would also include \$350 billion for infrastructure programs, such as highway construction, upgrades of health-care technology and an extension of unemployment benefits. Additionally, States would receive at least \$100 billion for Medicaid funding and other projects. The House and Senate are also working on their versions of a stimulus package.

The NCSHPO stimulus request is for \$50 million from the Historic Preservation Fund for historic preservation rehabilitation development grants. This request mirrors the \$25 million received for development grants in the 1983 Jobs Act. We are also continuing to work with the ACHP to identify potential funding needs for expediting Section 106 and other preservation reviews.

Interior Secretary Nomination Hearing

President-elect Obama has announced many of his cabinet appointees which now must be approved by the Senate. During the next few weeks committees will be holding confirmation hearings on the nominees. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will hold a confirmation hearing on January 15th on the nomination of Senator Ken Salazar (D-CO) to be Secretary of the Interior. NCSHPO and the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office will be submitting testimony in support of his nomination.

New House Rules

One of the first orders of business for the House was to pass by a vote of 242-181 a new rules package for the 111th Congress. New rules for this congress include:

- a repeal of the three-term limit on committee chairman;
- allowing lawmakers to link bills that do not meet pay-go requirements with other bills that have the offsets;

requiring amended bills include the word "forthwith," meaning the House must vote on the amended bill within minutes, effectively limiting the minority party's opportunity to send a bill back to committee.

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Bush Preserves National Monuments

President Bush announced the creation of three marine national monuments in the Pacific Ocean, totaling 195,000 square miles. The Antiquities Act of 1906 allows the President to take such actions without requiring congressional approval. The three monuments include the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument, near the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Rose Atoll Monument near American Samoa, and the seas surrounding seven islands that are U.S. territories scattered in the Pacific. In 2006 Bush also created the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in Hawaii.



Green Technology briefing

On Wednesday, the Senate Committee of the Environment and Public Works Held a briefing on the role that “green” technology will play in an economic recovery. Witnesses included Thomas Friedman, Pulitzer Prize winning author and New York Times columnist, and John Doerr, a partner in venture capital firm, Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers. Both witnesses conveyed urgency in a massive investment in environmental technology research, development and deployment, both in the interest of the environment and America’s future as a leader in the global economy and technological markets. The hearing was attended by Senators Boxer (Chairman, D-CA), Carper (D-DE), Lautenberg (D-NJ), Cardin (D-MD), Sanders (D-VT), Klobuchar (D-MN), Whitehouse (D-RI), Udall (D-CO) and Merkley (D-OR).



Transition

The District of Columbia is bracing itself for the inauguration of Barack Obama. President-elect Obama has been meeting with President Bush, former Presidents, Congressional leaders, advisors, the Transition Team...and the residents of the city who have seen him around town. Megan Brown, the Certified Local Government Program Coordinator at the National Park Service, was one of those residents earlier this week when she encountered Mr. Obama on the way from an event with Congressman Dick Durbin. She reports that he warmly (if briefly) responded to her hope that his administration would work on expanding historic preservation efforts. Preservationists are actively pushing preservation interests at every possible opportunity!



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

January 28-29 –NCSHPO Executive Committee Meeting,
Washington D.C.

March 8-11 – NCSHPO Annual Meeting/Advocacy Day
Washington D.C.