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March 5, 2010

Senator Lamar Alexander
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Alexander,

At a time when supporting sustainable communities and creating jobs are top priorities for the country, we are very concerned about the drastic funding cuts to the very programs that promote sustainability and create jobs: Save America's Treasures, Preserve America and National Heritage Areas.

Historic preservation programs like Save America's Treasures, Preserve America and National Heritage Areas are critical now more than ever – not only because they safeguard our national heritage, but because they serve as economic development engines and job creators in the thousands of communities they serve.

We have seen firsthand how one of these programs has had a positive impact on a nationally important historic resource. Thanks to your efforts, the Fiscal Year 2010 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill helped fund a number of conservation efforts across Tennessee. Knoxville's Governor William Blount Mansion Association, through a Save America's Treasures grant, received \$250,000. These vital funds were used to provide essential fire protection and rehabilitate the Blount Mansion home and visitor facility to improve public access.

Blount Mansion was the home of William Blount, who was appointed Governor of the Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio by George Washington. Blount was a signer of the U.S. Constitution and played a pivotal role in Tennessee becoming the sixteenth state. At its completion in 1792, the home and separate office behind the mansion became the center of political, civil, military, and social activity for the entire Territory. It is Knox County's only National Historic Landmark, a federal designation indicating exceptional value or quality in illustrating and interpreting the heritage of the United States.

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Save America's Treasures, the federal government's only bricks-and-mortar grant program, is one of the most successful tools we have for preserving the places that tell America's story. Over the past 10 years, Save America's Treasures has worked to restore over 1,100 structures and collections in every state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Almost \$300 million has been allocated through the program, and because it requires a one-to-one match, it has generated an additional \$377 million from other sources, making it a model federal program that successfully leverages private dollars from corporations, foundations and individuals.

Save America's Treasures is funded through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF). The HPF is funded not by taxpayer dollars, but through revenues from Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas leases. Yet since its inception, the HPF has typically only received one-third to one-half of its annual authorization of \$150 million. Elimination of the SAT program would result in a 30 percent cut to the HPF, the very backbone of the national historic preservation program.

Preservation programs like Save America's Treasures, Preserve America and National Heritage Areas generate economic development and create jobs, in part because rehabilitation is 20 to 40 percent more labor-intensive than new construction and keeps more dollars in hometown economies. It is estimated that the SAT program alone has added over 16,000 jobs to local and state economies.

It is tragically shortsighted to overlook or even cripple the potential of historic preservation programs. These projects are catalysts for other economic activity in communities, including heritage tourism, which is documented as a \$194 billion industry annually. Please restore funding (\$25 million for Save America's Treasures, \$4.6 million for Preserve America and \$17 million for National Heritage Areas) for these critical programs to their FY 2010 levels as you move forward in developing your spending bills for FY2011.

Please contact me if you need more information or want to discuss the preservation of these critical programs. Thank you so much for your support.

Sincerely,



Kim Trent
Executive Director