

**Rep. Leger Fernández
Statement on H.R. 6589**

**NPFPL Legislative Hearing (National Parks Service Cultural Resources, including
H.R. Historic Preservation Enhancement Act)**

April 28, 2022

Bill Statement

Thank you, Chair Neguse.

Before joining Congress, I had the honor to serve as Vice Chair of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. To provide a bit more context, I would note that my family and I have lived and breathed New Mexico for 17 generations. We are proud to be a part of its rich culture and history.

I introduced H.R. 6589, the Historic Preservation Enhancement Act, so that we can preserve places of struggle and perseverance across America. I also want to emphasize that H.R. 6589 is needed as well so that we can rebuild our infrastructure efficiently and responsibly after the enactment of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law; and so that we can support local economic development and jobs, especially for rural communities.

The Historic Preservation Enhancement Act provides permanent authorization to the Historic Preservation Fund - or HPF - and doubles its deposits to \$300 million for each fiscal year. The bill would also make amounts in the HPF available for expenditure without further Congressional appropriations.

I'm amazed at all the good the HPF does. Let me share a bit of that with you. It provides matching grants to states, tribes, local governments, and non-profit organizations to pay for surveys, training, and grants. The HPF also supports important competitive grant programs like the American Civil Rights Grants Program and Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants Program.

These investments have directly enabled-

1. [Two main street revitalization projects](#) in Brigham City, Utah,

2. The Idaho State Historic Preservation Office's work to complete a nomination for the Nez Perce Tribe's Rapid River Fishery.
3. The two-story adobe Hacienda at the Los Luceros Historic Site in my district.
4. And so much more.

Despite chronic underfunding, for more than four decades, the HPF has facilitated nearly 90,000 listings on the National Register, surveyed millions of acres to protect significant cultural resources, and leveraged over \$100 billion in private investment through the federal Historic Tax Credit. That tax credit has rehabilitated 47,000 historic buildings and created nearly 3 million local jobs.

It's time we recognize the value of the HPF and help it meet the growing needs of state and tribal historic preservation officers and communities across our country.

With the additional funding and long-term certainty provided by this bill, we will enable state and tribal historic preservation offices to better protect our culture – our herencia - and facilitate infrastructure and economic development.

Through the National Historic Preservation Act, federal agencies must consider how their projects impact historic properties. This means SHPOs and THPOs are a key part of advancing many projects.

In fiscal year 2021, SHPO offices reviewed over 124,000 federal undertakings - that's 2100 per office that year. This is an increase of close to 14,000 reviews from the previous fiscal year. THPOs face the same growing demand.

I proudly voted for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law because I know how important it is to invest in clean water for our communities, broadband for our school children's education, telehealth and businesses, roads so that our commerce can get to market, and supply chains can get unclogged. The infrastructure bill was an amazing achievement. Who in this committee would be against getting that infrastructure actually built? Well, to get that broadband built, we need to comply with the Section 106 process and that means our THPOs and SHPOs need the funding to clear the projects.

So while some of my colleagues may be concerned with the mandatory funding aspect of my bill, I would say that the HPF is just too important. In fact, Congress has chosen to provide mandatory funding to other programs it considers critical, like it did for the Land and Water Conservation Fund on a bipartisan basis.

We must fully fund our historic preservation offices as we undertake the historic investments in infrastructure and as we build a richer America.

I welcome the opportunity to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and the administration to make any necessary adjustments to the bill and look forward to today's discussion. Thank you, I yield back.