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Support Historic Preservation

BACKGROUND

The AIA/WA Council supports historic preservation and landmark designation, preservation of historic districts, incentives, codes and zoning regulations, architectural records, and education with the purpose of supporting preservation. Preservation encourages the productive and innovative reuse of historic facilities. The reuse of existing historic facilities also serves as a means of conserving community resources and history. State and local public agencies need to develop policies, which encourage, rather than discourage, such reuse.

SUPPORT SB 5056 — DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Washington Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation is the lead agency responsible for the preservation of Washington's historic and cultural resources. It oversees programs to promote the preservation of significant buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts. However, the agency lacks the visibility it needs to be truly effective in its mission.

Over the years, it has been shuffled between state agencies and is currently housed under the Department of Community, Trade & Economic Development. Being established as an independent state agency will allow it to better serve Washington's communities in their efforts to preserve and document their past.

SUPPORT HB 1352 / SB 533 I — PRESERVE & RESTORE HISTORIC COUNTY COURTHOUSES

Few public buildings have had an impact on their communities like our historic county courthouses. Housing offices for county judges, treasurers, auditors, assessors and commissioners, these buildings are at the center of the public's interaction with its government. These offices all have daily interaction with the public.

Out of Washington's 39 counties, 28 have historic courthouses. To be considered historic the building must be 50 or more years old, retain its original design integrity and historical context, and must actively serve as the publicly owned county seat of government. A 2003 study by the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation found that these community landmarks have over \$93 million in unmet capital facility, renovation and repair needs. In fact 27 of 28 are in dire need of repair and facility upgrades.

HB 1352 / SB 1352 establishes \$20 million a biennium grant program for counties to restore and preserve historic courthouses. With many counties' budgets strained to just provide critical services, state assistance is needed to preserve these community treasures.

AMERICANS AGREE THAT PRESERVATION OF AMERICA'S BUILDINGS IS A PRIORITY

In a recent nationwide poll of voters conducted December 16-22, 2004, (1,000 sample, margin of error +/- 3.1) by two respected national pollsters - The Tarrance Group, a Republican firm, and Lake Snell and Perry, a Democratic firm - it was found that historic preservation is an important issue among the national electorate.

The survey found that based on a 0-10 scale of issue importance, the loss of historic buildings and neighborhoods is a "hot button" issue with 21 percent of voters (those rating it a "10"). Overall, 55 percent rated the issue at least a 7 on the scale of importance. On another question, two-thirds of the voters surveyed (67 percent) said they agreed with the statement, "Historic buildings should be preserved even if it means giving their owners additional tax breaks."

Based on this bipartisan survey, it is apparent that a large chunk of the electorate nationwide - between one-fifth and one-fourth - see historic preservation as a priority of utmost importance and that heavy majorities of voters are in some level of agreement about the need to the subject.