



**National Trust *for*
Historic Preservation®**

March 24, 2026

Senator Jim Guthrie, Chair
Senate State Affairs Committee
Idaho State Legislature
Boise, ID 83720

RE: HB 898 - State Historic Preservation Officer

Dear Chairman Guthrie and Members of the State Affairs Committee,

On behalf of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and our more than 1,500 members and supporters in Idaho, I am writing to express our concerns regarding HB 898 and its potential impact on the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office.

Chartered by Congress in 1949, the National Trust is the nation's leading private nonprofit historic preservation organization. We work with government, nonprofit, and private partners – including the 59 State Historic Preservation Offices – to protect historic places across the country.

Since it was established in 1972, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been effectively housed within the Idaho Historical Society. This structure reflects national best practice. Rather than moving the Idaho SHPO to a new Office of Species, Minerals and Energy Coordination (OSMEC), we join Preservation Idaho to support keeping the agency at its current location within the Idaho Historical Society.

Across the country, state historic preservation offices are typically located within departments whose missions align with preservation, such as economic development and tourism, parks and recreation, natural resources and conservation, cultural affairs, and state historical societies.

Maintaining the SHPO within the Idaho Historical Society facilitates coordination across a range of related services and functions, including historic sites, archives, interpretation, and education programs. This alignment supports efficient delivery of services to Idaho residents and communities, including Certified Local Governments. Keeping the SHPO within an agency with related functions avoids inefficiencies that may occur if SHPO staff are split from historians and other professionals at the Historical Society with whom they frequently collaborate.

The Idaho SHPO is widely recognized for its highly efficient and timely review process for projects covered by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Relocating the office to a newly created Office of Species, Minerals and Energy Coordination risks disrupting this well-functioning system without a clear benefit. In addition, keeping SHPO functions within the Historical Society would avoid potential conflicts of interest that could result when OSMEC projects are submitted for SHPO review. Maintaining the current structure helps preserve the independence and credibility of the review process.

For these reasons, we respectfully encourage the Committee to preserve the existing placement of the Idaho SHPO within the Idaho Historical Society. Doing so will ensure continuity, efficiency, and the continued effective stewardship of Idaho's irreplaceable historic resources.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Nieweg".

Rob Nieweg, Senior Vice-President, National Trust for Historic Preservation