

**STATEMENT OF P. DANIEL SMITH, SPECIAL ASSISTANT, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 1446 AND S. 1306 TO SUPPORT THE EFFORTS OF THE CALIFORNIA MISSIONS FOUNDATION TO RESTORE AND REPAIR THE SPANISH COLONIAL AND MISSION-ERA MISSIONS IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA AND TO PRESERVE THE ARTWORKS AND ARTIFACTS OF THESE MISSIONS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

**March 9, 2004**

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Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 1306 and H.R. 1446 authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to make matching, historic preservation grants to the California Missions Foundation to restore and repair California's historically significant Spanish mission buildings and their associated historic artworks and artifacts. Under this bill, grants up to \$10 million over a 5-year period would be made through the authority of Section 101 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

While the goal of this legislation is admirable, the Department opposes S. 1306 and H.R. 1446. We cannot support this new Federal funding commitment at a time when we are trying to focus our available resources on taking care of existing National Park Service responsibilities. Nor can we support legislative earmarks that would effectively take limited and critically needed historic preservation operations funding away and divert it to these specific purposes under the National Historic Preservation Act. The Department strongly supports the principle that States, tribes, and local governments – not the Federal government – are best suited to determine the highest priorities for awarding grants in

each jurisdiction under the Historic Preservation Fund. This has been the guiding idea of the National Historic Preservation Act since its passage in the mid-1960s. Under the current process, the Department allocates blocks of funds to States and to Indian tribes who then, in turn, award funding to properties and projects that meet the most urgent needs within the individual jurisdiction. There are many and very worthy projects everywhere, including other individual and classes of historic building that are regrettably in need of assistance from the Historic Preservation Fund.

The Department of the Interior does support efforts to preserve for this and future generations the story of Father Junipero Serra and the founding of California's incomparable chain of colonial-era missions. Over a 54-year period beginning in 1769, Serra, and his fellow Jesuits, followed later by the Franciscans, built with native Indian labor a chain of mission complexes that today stretch along the coast for 600 miles from San Diego to Sonoma – north of San Francisco. It is a rich story of tenacity, bravery, cultural conflict, greed, mistrust, and, ultimately, hope. As a nation, we are richer for Serra and his compatriot's struggles and for the labors of California's native peoples. We also are fortunate that so many of these remarkable historic places survive in California today. The Department recognizes that these missions are powerful tangible evidence of our nation's remarkable story and worthy of our care and attention.

We believe, however, that there are other sources of funding available for the restoration at the California missions. One national example is the Save America's Treasures program that awards grants for preservation and conservation work on nationally

significant intellectual and cultural artifacts and nationally significant historic structures and sites. Each California Mission is a “national class property” and would, we believe, compete favorably in the Save America’s Treasures program as well in any other fundraising campaign. The Department would be more than happy to work with the California Missions Foundation to develop Save America’s Treasures applications as well as fundraising strategies to accomplish this important work.

We note that Section 3(c) of S. 1306 and H.R.1446 requires detailed professional condition assessments and scopes of work to ensure that preservation and conservation needs are fully assessed, that the highest priority and most critical work is undertaken, and that any work supported by these grants meets the highest professional standards. The California missions are historic properties significant to every American citizen and we must ensure that any work done there is of the highest caliber.

Should S. 1306 or H.R. 1446 move to a committee markup, we would suggest requiring a formal partnership role for the appropriate Catholic Church archdioceses where the missions remain active churches and in church ownership. Without the full partnership and support of the Church, the most effective and best long-term preservation of these national treasures cannot be assured.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments S. 1306 and H.R. 1446. This concludes my prepared testimony. I would be glad to answer any questions that you or the members of the committee may have.