

Statement of Aimee Kathryn Jorjani  
Nominee for the Position of Chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
United States Senate

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Chairman Murkowski, Senator Cantwell, and Members of the Committee, it is my honor to appear before you today as the nominee for the position of Chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. I am delighted to be a part of this hearing during the month of May, which is typically known as Preservation Month.

I grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin where my fascination with historic preservation began admiring the many Cream City brick buildings built by German and Polish-Americans. Cream City was named for the light color of the local clay and as a tribute to the city's frothy brewing heritage. While many of those buildings sat underutilized in my youth, I always saw beauty in them. They represented our city's heritage and was locally-sourced to build a corner tavern, factory, warehouse, church, theater, or home. Many of those buildings have since been restored or re-adapted through historic preservation programs and incentives spurring economic development and keeping history alive. Today, local media and publications regularly highlight hidden gems and neighborhoods and take us along an urban adventure to both remember the past while embracing it for the future. Milwaukee's historic built environment is now hip.

As the daughter of a Vietnam veteran and a high school library assistant who taught my siblings and I midwestern values and a strong work ethic, I was proud to become the first member of my family to earn a college degree. Truth be told, I had worked so many jobs since the age of thirteen that the rigors of earning a degree were a welcomed change of pace.

After college, I worked for several years for a then-junior member of Congress, Paul Ryan from Wisconsin. Working for Speaker Ryan afforded me the honor of serving my fellow Wisconsinites as well as our great nation. Witnessing history first-hand alongside Speaker Ryan on September 11th was an experience I will never forget. Experiencing that horrific tragedy did have two positive impacts on me. First, at the end of the day, our proud flag was still there flying across the street. Second, witnessing such an historic moment instilled in me a greater understanding of the importance of learning American history and preserving the places where the events that shape our nation occur.

Following my tenure on Capitol Hill. I was blessed with the opportunity to continue pursuing my passion for preservation as a senior advisor to the Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior for seven years. Working directly for the Chief Operating Officer of a cabinet agency with 70,000 employees and 280,000 volunteers operating in 2,400 locations with a \$12 billion budget, I saw how Deputy Secretary Scarlett managed effectively and efficiently with both formal and informal authority. In that capacity, I was charged with overseeing the establishment and implementation of the Preserve America program among others. My portfolio of issues at

the Department afforded me the opportunity to work in close coordination with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the National Park Service and other agencies and partners.

I assisted in the budget formulation process and justification for the Historic Preservation Fund. I worked to create a justification utilizing the unique types of services Tribal Historic Preservation Officers provide in assuming preservation responsibilities as an active expression of tribal sovereignty. I was intimately involved in seven rounds of Preserve America grants awarded under the program over three years where I assembled several inter-agency review teams, ensured that applications were reviewed consistently, and awarded within a set-time frame. The program was a tool to utilize local heritage in a productive and sustainable way. During that time, we enabled a network of more than 900 participating communities in all 50 states. I also managed and staffed the interagency Preserve America Steering Committee during fifty-two monthly meetings for the Co-Chair. I achieved this while also working on other historic preservation-related tasks for the Secretary and while serving as the Department's first Historic Preservation Officer to coordinate eight bureaus and their responsibilities in complying with the Preserve America Executive Order.

Through this work I developed a strong working knowledge of the national preservation program and its unique decentralized structure. I also served as the political point of contact for Preserve America as it grew for CEQ, the East Wing, OMB, the Hill, and many senior policy officials throughout the government. I worked closely with the Historic Preservation Caucus on the Hill and was later part of the effort to authorize the Preserve America program into law. Through all these management experiences, I remained focused on creating long-term value by delivering high performance with high integrity.

In order to continue work in what became a passion as the inevitable end to my tenure at Interior was approaching in 2008 and despite all we accomplished, I knew I needed an advanced degree to comply with certain standards. I pursued my Masters in Historic Preservation at Goucher College while starting and raising a young family alongside my supportive husband Dan. My graduate studies addressed the issue of performance management in federal historic preservation grantmaking and received Goucher's award for best historic preservation master's thesis of the year.

In the interim since serving at the Department of the Interior I have managed to fulfill my dream of being a mom while also remaining actively engaged in the pursuit of my passion for historic preservation. Along the way, various projects afforded me with the opportunity to learn challenges State Historic Preservation Officers face in implementing the National Historic Preservation Act on behalf of the federal government and think creatively of ways to attract visitors to a historic scenic railroad in New Mexico and Colorado. I served on two boards of national preservation organizations, offered guidance on a national task force, and have dragged my children to many, many historic places of interest.

I am deeply honored and humbled to have been nominated as the first Senate confirmed, full-time Chairman of the ACHP. Having a full-time Chair will be beneficial to the national preservation program as an emergent role of being a key collaborate partner. I will devote time to resolving complex issues within the federal interagency process and with other Administration

officials. I will seek opportunities to better communicate among governments at all levels, the nonprofit community and the private sector while utilizing many existing preservation tools.

If confirmed, I am eager to examine agency preservation policies and actions in a manner that furthers stewardship of historic properties while respecting the agencies' primary missions. In the spirit of Preserve America, I will seek to facilitate preservation programs and projects for contemporary purposes in a manner that furthers, not impedes economic development and heritage tourism. I look forward to working with the Congress, the Administration, and stakeholders, including Tribes and states, to ensure that cultural resources are considered at the earliest stages of project planning to avoid process delays. I also look forward to examining ways to bring the digitization of historic property information to the 21<sup>st</sup> century in order to create more efficiencies for project planning.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify, I would be happy to answer any questions members of the committee may have.