

**NATIONAL AND LOCAL PRESERVATION AND CULTURAL HERITAGE LEADERS
TESTIFY AT CONGRESSIONAL HEARING ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION EFFORTS IN
THE GULF COAST REGION**

*National Trust and Partners Advocate for Legislative Package of Grants and Funds for
Affected Areas of Gulf Coast*

Washington, D.C. (November 1, 2005) – Today **National Trust for Historic Preservation President Richard Moe** testified about the role of preservation in the recovery of the Gulf Coast Region during a House Government Reform Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census hearing. The hearing, headed by Rep. Turner (R-OH), examined the roles of federal, state and local governments in preserving the historic properties along the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The National Trust has partnered with the American Institute of Architects to lead a coalition of national preservation organizations and architects to support a legislative package now before Congress that would direct federal and state resources for preservation efforts in the affected areas of the Gulf Coast region.

Moe drew from experiences during his recent trips to the affected areas of the Gulf Coast during his testimony. “Hurricane Katrina has the potential to become the greatest cultural tragedy the United States has ever seen. After the Mississippi River floods of 1993, the Northridge earthquake of 1994, and numerous other natural disasters, we have learned that almost always the first impulse of local officials is to tear down almost every damaged building, leaving many historic buildings needlessly lost in the aftermath. We are determined not to let this happen in the historic Gulf Coast region. The role of government is critical at every level to prevent this from becoming a reality,” Moe said.

Moe urged Congress to provide targeted sources of federal and state funding for the preservation of storm-damaged structures. Included in the legislative package advocated by the National Trust and its partners is a two-year, \$60 million Historic Preservation Disaster Relief Grants Program, which would be administered by the states with no federal match. This program would provide immediate federal preservation grant assistance to historic property owners and would supplement any funds from insurance companies, FEMA, and other sources. The legislative package also calls for the streamlining and adjustment of the existing tax credit for rehabilitating historic commercial structures so that it can work vigorously as a targeted incentive for restoring damaged historic buildings – especially those that house retail stores in business communities; and a new tax credit for homeowners of historic owner-occupied residential buildings that are currently ineligible for restoration incentives. The historic homeowner incentive would provide a 30 percent credit for qualified rehabilitation expenses made by owners who substantially rehabilitate historic homes in the Hurricane Disaster Area. The National Trust designed this package immediately in response to Katrina and has been working with the preservation community to advance the package on Capitol Hill since early September.

“The goal of the recovery efforts should be to allow displaced people to come home to communities that are healthy, vibrant, livable places that retain the character that makes

them unique,” said Moe. “Restoring the historic structures is essential to restoring the cultural and economic well being of so many communities in the states affected by Katrina. Federal, state, and local governments in the region, armed with adequate resources, should make every effort to save the historic buildings of the Gulf Coast region where possible.”

In addition to Moe, the Subcommittee also heard from federal, state, and local stakeholders and officials involved in historic preservation efforts along the Gulf Coast, including: John Nau, chairman, Advisory Council for Historic Preservation; Jan Matthews, associate director for cultural resources, National Park Service; Mitchell J. Landrieu, lieutenant governor of Louisiana; Norman Koonce, executive vice president and CEO, the American Institute of Architects; H.T. Holmes, director, Mississippi Department of Archives and History; Derrick Evans, founder/director, Turkey Creek Community Initiative; Patricia H. Gay, executive director, Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans; and David Preziosi, executive director, Mississippi Heritage Trust.