

February 17, 2006

## BUILDING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CONGRESS

### The Historic Preservation Caucus

As of this week, the Congressional Historic Preservation Caucus (now just in the House of Representatives) numbers 95. The caucus, started in 2003 by Representative Brad Miller (D-NC) and co-chaired by Representative Michael Turner (R-OH), represents an enormous opportunity for grassroots preservation in Congress.

For the recent list, visit <http://www.preservationaction/caucus/caucus06.htm>.

Now, more than ever, we need your help to strengthen support for preservation in Congress. Threats are easier to fight and opportunities more plentiful with support from our elected leaders. Their doors are open to you here in our nation's capitol, or any day, in their districts back home. For preservation to see real progress, we need to walk through as many open doors as we can find. Oftentimes, doors will open with a simple knock and introduction.

Most anyone who seeks elected office, especially at the national level, cares about America's heritage. It's up to each of us to figure out how to leverage that interest to expand support for preservation in Congress. This proactive approach to grassroots lobbying – which is all about building a relationship with Congress – takes time. We need to make a little time this year to get to know the people who can help us, and help them understand why what we support is important to the health of the communities they care about.

Preservation Action and DC partners are working to support the caucus by holding fun and informative sessions for caucus members and their staff. Preservation Action is conducting regular interviews with caucus members – excerpts from these will be included in subsequent updates.

Preservation Action has created web pages dedicated to each state, it's Congressional delegation, and a summary of individual member's key committee affiliation as it relates to core preservation policies. Visit the new front page for these state pages at:

<http://www.preservationaction.org/stateprofiles06.htm>.

Once you click on your state's page, go to your state's delegation, listed first, in red. (Note that Preservation Action will be adding photographs, your case studies, case books, feedback from Lobby Day and other information to help advocates in the state). Check to see which Representatives in your state are caucus members. Caucus membership is coded green.

Send a thank you to current caucus members – a link to their website is provided on each state's delegation page. Just click on the Representative's name; all member websites include email interfaces as well as mailing information.

Check to see which Representatives in your state maintain key committee membership and are not currently on the caucus. If you have members on key committees, invest some time in targeting these Representatives. If you are coming to Lobby Day and already have a meeting planned, be sure to ask these key members to join, or provide their staff with information about the caucus. If you aren't coming to Lobby Day, make an appointment with key members in your district.

To improve your chances of getting a "yes," take a look at the Representative's website to understand their primary interests, check with Preservation Action or other advocates in your area to see if the Representative has a track record with preservation, and conduct a web search to see if you can make a connection.

Regardless of their committee affiliation, all Representatives need to be asked to join the Historic Preservation Caucus. At the very least, asking raises the caucus's visibility. Representatives have relationships with one another, and given how many federal agencies support preservation in different ways, it's critical we cover all our bases, now more than ever.

For the full text of an interview with caucus co-chair Michael Turner, visit:

<http://www.preservationaction.org/states/oh-interview%20turner.htm>

Coming next week: Representative Phil English (R-PA) on what he thinks is going to happen with the proposed rehabilitation tax credit amendments this year, and what preservationists need to do to get the historic homeowner's tax credit passed.

**IMPORTANT DATE:** Preservation Action's Annual Meeting and Lobby Day, Washington, DC, March 13-14.