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FEDERAL UPDATE

Senate Energy Committee Includes Incentives for Energy-Efficiency Retrofits for Historic Buildings

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee marked up the Building Efficiency title of its version of the energy/climate change bill on Thursday and included a 120 percent boost in incentives for doing energy retrofits on properties listed in the National Register. The House Energy and Commerce Committee already approved the same provision in its version of the energy bill, the “American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009” (HR 2454).

The Senate bill also compromised in setting a goal of 15% for renewable energy generation compared to 20% approved in the House Energy and Commerce Committee, a development which could pose a serious roadblock for the legislation down the road. In the House, the leadership hopes to have the climate change bill on the floor before the July 4th recess, but House Ways and Means Committee chairman Charles Rangel (D-NY) stated this week that a proposed health care reform bill would take priority over the energy bill in his committee.

In addition, the Senate Energy Committee also rejected an amendment sponsored by ranking member Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) which would have rolled back the requirements that will require building codes to be reviewed in order to improve energy efficiency in residential and commercial buildings. Specifically, the draft language requires the Secretary of Energy to support reviewing and updating national model building energy codes at least every three years to boost energy efficiency by 30 percent of 2006 levels during or after 2010, and reach a 50 percent level after or during 2016.

The Senate Energy Committee will reconvene on June 9th for a final vote to approve the other titles of its draft energy bill.

Preservationists Weigh In on Mining Reform Bill in House

The National Trust is working with House Natural Resources Committee on a draft bill mining reform bill being assembled by committee chairman Nick Rahall (D-WV) that would raise the rates oil and gas companies pay to drill on public lands for the first time since the 1980s, increasing royalties from 12.5 percent to 18.75 percent. It would also shorten drilling lease terms from 10 years to five years and require companies not actively using leases to pay a fee, a variation of the “use it or lose it” concept Democrats pressed during the 2008 presidential campaign.

The bill also would eliminate the Royalty-in-Kind (RIK) program through which leaseholders could pay royalties in oil or gas. In addition, offshore drilling leases would have to meet a “no discharge” requirement to diminish ocean pollution and energy production leasing rules would also expand to include renewable sources such as wind and solar. In addition, the bill makes uranium

a leasable mineral which means the Federal government can regulate and/or reject uranium mine claims.

The Trust has reviewed the mining reform bill and has submitted comments to committee staff outlining its concerns regarding the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) compliance prior to making mineral lease commitments. The Trust comments include seeking better consultation with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Strategic Plans and a more robust review of cultural and historic resources prior to making mineral leasing commitments.

STATE AND LOCAL UPDATE

California State Parks Face Mass Closures from State Budget Crisis

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposed budget for FY 2010 would eliminate state funding for California's state park system - which will result in the mass closure of more than 80% of the 279-unit state park system.

Last year, in response to the Governor's previous proposal to close 48 state parks, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named the California state park system to its annual list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. Together with its Save Our State Parks (SOS) Campaign and the support of tens of thousands of Californians, the Trust successfully prevented the closure of state parks. However, the current budget proposal would have a devastating impact on California state parks and the unique heritage they protect. California's state park system, the largest state park system in the U.S., encompasses a vast array of historic sites that chronicle the state's rich and storied heritage. The system includes 51 designated State Historic Parks, and protects and interprets sites ranging from the Angel Island Immigration Station, just restored and reopened to the public at great expense, to the 101-year-old Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, recently saved from a proposed factory farm on its border.

These ill-conceived budget cuts are being proposed as a way to save the state money, but the fact is closing parks actually costs the state far more money than it saves. According to the California State Parks Foundation, each dollar invested in state parks generates \$2.35 in revenue for the state's general fund. But its not just dollars and cents that are at stake. Preservationists know from experience that an unused building is a building at risk. Without ongoing maintenance, small leaks become major structural failures. Fewer eyes minding closed parks will lead to increased risk of theft, arson, and vandalism. In addition, historic resources in California State Parks receive only about 30% of the annual funding they actually require so even just one year of closures will make an already bad situation even worse for historic structures.

Closure of State
Parks May
Exacerbate
Already Critical
Budget Crisis
with Additional
Revenue Loss

Detroit City
Council and
Mayor Targeted
for Grassroots
Campaign to
Save Tiger
Stadium Under
Terms of
Previously
Agreed Upon
Redevelopment
Proposal

Preservations Fight to Stop Demolition of Tiger Stadium

For nearly 20 years, Detroit's Tiger Stadium has been the focus of a local and nationwide effort to preserve an icon of baseball and a major national historic landmark. As one of the last remaining historic ballparks, the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed the stadium on the list of 11 Most Endangered Places in America in 1991. Although partial demolition of the stadium took place last year, the remaining portion of the ballpark was slated for redevelopment that would preserve historic elements of the stadium as retail, office and community space, as well as the playing field itself and the lower deck seating as a venue for youth baseball.

This vision was lost on Tuesday, June 2nd when the economic development arm of the city voted to follow through with complete demolition of Tiger Stadium. Demolition equipment was on site the following day, despite protests from preservationists, baseball enthusiasts and local activists. Demolition may take place as early as June 8th. Complete demolition at this time will result only in another empty parcel in a city filled with vacant land awaiting new construction since no alternative plan for the site with any real viability currently exists.

Under a redevelopment proposal negotiated with the City last year, the Old Tiger Stadium Conservancy had agreed to meet a specific cash fundraising goal as part of the redevelopment plan for the stadium which they subsequently failed to do thereby giving the City claim to demolish the remainder of the Stadium. However, the Conservancy did make good progress in raising funds despite the bad economy and recession and, though technically in default, accomplished enough to feel they would be given the benefit of the doubt in perhaps seeking an extension of the deadline to raise the remaining funds. In addition, since the City has no prospects of a developer or any other use of the site, it seems all the more tragic that a hasty demolition would be scheduled.

The National Trust has responded with a grassroots campaign to contact Detroit Mayor Dave Bing and members of the City Council to oppose this plan that would short circuit redevelopment of this iconic historic landmark which could transform it back into a thriving center of community activity.