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### ***FEDERAL UPDATE***

House Passes Financial Bailout Package with Expanded Rehab Tax Credits for Disaster Relief in Gulf States and Midwest

The House leadership and the White House mounted a frantic campaign this week to assemble enough votes to pass a financial bailout of Wall Street after the first version of the bill was defeated in the House by a mere 13 votes (205-228). The revised bill (HR 1424), which passed the Senate on Wednesday, passed the House by a 263-171 margin on Friday. The President signed the bill into law almost immediately after House passage.

In between the heavy lobbying on both sides of the aisle on the bailout package, significant legislation was passed prior to Congress adjourning for the year.

**FY'09 Appropriations/Continuing Resolution (HR 2638)**. The President signed the continuing resolution (CR) on Tuesday that includes \$22.9 billion in disaster relief and general funding for the federal government through March 6<sup>th</sup>. The disaster relief included \$50 million for "infrastructure repairs" for damage inflicted by Hurricane Ike on Galveston, TX. However, the funding of \$35 million that was requested by the Trust and its partners for rehabilitation of flood-damaged historic properties in the Midwestern states was not included.

**Senate Tax Extenders Package (HR 6049)**. The Senate passed the tax extenders package by a vote of 75-24 on Wednesday with expanded federal rehab and New Market Tax credits for disaster relief for rehabbing historic properties in the Gulf Coast states damaged by Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. Many rehab projects in the Gulf Coast states were still in progress and a one-year extension was necessary to see these projects to completion. The same expansion of the federal rehab tax credits was also enacted for 10 Midwestern states for historic properties damaged by the recent flooding in that region of the country. The House approved the extenders package which was included as an amendment to the financial bailout bill.

**Rail Safety Bill (HR 2095)**. The Senate passed the amended version of the Rail Safety Bill on Wednesday with compromise language negotiated by the National Trust requiring the Secretary of Transportation to issue a report [within one year of enactment] that includes "recommendations for any regulatory or legislative amendments that may streamline compliance with the requirements described in a manner consistent with railroad safety and the policies and purposes of section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act." The Senate voted clears the measure for the president's signature. While the Bush administration has threatened to veto earlier versions of the Amtrak bill, the White House issued no statement of administration policy on this bill. Supporters are taking President Bush's silence as a signal he will sign the bill, and the overwhelming support in both chambers would be enough to override a possible veto.

Abbreviated  
Lame Duck  
Session in  
November is  
Final Chance for  
PA/SAT and  
Conservation  
System  
Authorization  
Bills to Pass in  
110<sup>th</sup> Congress

**Senate Omnibus Lands Package.** The Senate leadership announced that it will take up a 150-bill omnibus lands package that will be attached as an amendment to a wilderness bill (HR 5151) in an abbreviated, post-election, lame duck session the week of November 17<sup>th</sup>. The omnibus package includes two key preservation bills which are caught up in the mire of negotiations over the lands package — S. 2262, a bill authorizing the Preserve America and Save America’s Treasures programs, and S. 1139, a bill codifying the National Landscape Conservation System, which was previously listed on the National Trust’s Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places list. Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) has signaled he will continue to raise his previous objections to various elements of the lands package, but Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) has indicated that he believes the Democratic majority has the 60 votes needed to overcome Coburn’s objections and win approval of these key preservation bills.

Hague  
Convention on  
Cultural Heritage  
Dates Back to  
Eisenhower  
Administration

**Senate Ratification of Hague Convention.** On September 25th, the Senate voted in support the United States’ ratification of the 1954 Hague Convention, the primary set of international guidelines governing treatment of cultural heritage during armed conflict. The 1954 Hague Convention has its origins in the Eisenhower Administration and is intended to ensure respect for the cultural heritage and sites of the parties to the convention. The United States was one of the first nations to sign the Convention and now joins 121 other nations in ratification.

