

# Historic Preservation and National Defense

Historic Preservation law DOES NOT interfere with National Security or  
Military Readiness and Training

*Section 2816 in H.R.4435*, misleadingly suggests our national security is compromised because of sensible considerations established by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966.

**Including properties on the National Register does not prevent Federal Agencies or the Military from taking action to advance its projects, activities, and programs, and to protect national security.** Over the nearly fifty-year history of the NHPA, the Department of Defense (DoD), the National Park Service (NPS), and the Advisory Council on History Preservation (ACHP) have not identified a single instance where the designation of an historic property has impeded military readiness. A National Register listing does require that Federal Agencies consider possible adverse effects of their actions on historic resources before making a final decision. However, the final decision about how to proceed resides entirely with the Federal Agency.

**The DoD, NPS, and the ACHP Do Not Believe this Legislation is Necessary.**

- Testifying before the House Natural Resources Committee, the DoD stated “we have not found compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) to be an impediment to our ability to meet our military readiness obligations” and that the NHPA does not threaten their ability to meet vital national defense missions, including training.
- In its testimony, the NPS stated “the Department is unaware of specific cases where National Register, NHL, or World Heritage List designations have adversely affected national security.”

**Listing on the National Register of Historic Places, as a National Historic Landmark (NHL), or as a World Heritage Site, does not guarantee historic resources will be preserved.** Numerous examples show that the Military and Federal Agencies can and do, in fact, demolish historic buildings, make non-compatible renovations, and add non-historic structures to historic districts. Examples include:

- The Pensacola Naval Air Station (an NHL) demolished instead of repairing 33 historic structures after Hurricane Ivan hit in 2004.
- The Navy has demolished many historic buildings, and built many new buildings, within the Pearl Harbor National Historic Landmark District.
- The United States Naval Academy (also an NHL) is planning construction of a new Center for Cyber Security Building in a prominent waterfront location within the Naval Academy’s historic landscape.

**Listing properties on the National Register is a time-tested and common sense way to require modest considerations for our historic resources. Altering this process under the rubric of “national security” has the potential to undermine and politicize our system of recognition for significant historic resources.**

- Section 2816 would allow the expedited removal or veto of federal properties from listing on the National Register for reasons of national security. Our public building legacy includes custom houses, courthouses, post offices, border stations, and federal agency offices across the country that have come to symbolize the history and achievements of the federal government.
- The architectural excellence that has influenced America’s public buildings ranges from Greek Revival monuments to bold Modern masterpieces that reflect over 250 years of architectural design. A broadly interpreted exemption to delist properties from the National Register would weaken the already modest considerations our most valued cultural assets currently receive.

**Reject Section 2816 in the House Defense Authorization bill as an unwarranted infringement our nation’s ability to preserve its most important historic properties.**

The following organizations oppose Section 2816: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, Preservation Action, National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, Society for American Archaeology, American Cultural Resources Association, Society for Historical Archaeology, US/ICOMOS, Lawyer's Committee for Cultural Heritage Preservation and the American Alliance of Museums