



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

March 27, 2009

The Honorable Chip Rogers
Senate Majority Leader
236 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Majority Leader Rogers:

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) is greatly concerned about the Georgia House of Representative's version (HB 119) of the state's budget for Fiscal Year 2010. This plan would practically eliminate the state's archaeological program precisely at a time when it is needed most.

SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to the research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With more than 7,500 members, SAA represents professional archaeologists in colleges and universities, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. SAA has members in all 50 states as well as many other nations around the world.

HB 119 cuts more than \$250,000 from the Historic Preservation Division (HPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, eliminating the State Archaeologist and other positions. These reductions would seriously hamper the State of Georgia's ability to conduct important project reviews and consultations required by federal law. If the cuts in HB 119 were enacted, the state would see a substantial delay in the implementation of stimulus projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Federal agencies are required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 to consult with HPD whenever federal actions in Georgia may affect historic properties, including archaeological sites. HB 119 will eliminate the review staff needed by the state to respond in a timely fashion.

In addition, federally-required consultations with Native American tribes on federally-funded projects would also be delayed or eliminated, potentially exposing federal agencies to legal challenge, further delaying implementation of needed stimulus projects. A number of legally-required project surveys on state lands would have to be contracted to professional consulting companies, which may incur costs to the state greater than the amount of spending reduced by the legislation. The proposed cuts would also end funding for proper storage of the artifact collections recovered from state lands. These materials belong to the people of Georgia and deserve to be curated in a scientifically sound manner. Finally, the State Archaeologist's Office provides public

education to Georgia's residents and visitors regarding the state's historic and prehistoric past. This critical service to the public will be lost if the cuts are allowed to stand.

While we understand that many states are facing difficult fiscal situations due to the current economic situation, the House budget's proposed reductions to the HPD are counterproductive and will cause the state more problems than it will solve. These reductions will result in a substantial delay in the implementation of badly needed stimulus projects, difficulty for the state to carry out legally-required reviews and consultations, and the inappropriate care and storage of irreplaceable archaeological resources.

We respectfully urge the State Senate to restore full funding for the state archaeology program in its version of the Fiscal Year 2010 budget.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dean R. Snow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dean" being the most prominent.

Dean R. Snow
President