

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:

Kirk Wilson
(717) 783-9882

**SENATE REPUBLICAN BUDGET PROPOSAL WOULD
SHUTTER 23 PA HISTORIC SITES**

Bill Would Jeopardize Historical Assets Held in Trust for the People of Pennsylvania

Harrisburg – Twenty three state historic sites would be forced to close under a budget proposed and passed by Senate Republicans, according to Barbara Franco, executive director of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC).

In addition, The State Museum of Pennsylvania could open only three days a week, denying an estimated 70,000 people -- half of them school children -- the educational experience of a tour.

“Senate Bill 850’s elimination of another \$6.8 million from the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund would devastate our ability to provide for essential repairs, fire and security protection and related needs at more than 450 buildings and their associated infrastructure at sites and museums managed by PHMC,” Franco said.

“These buildings contain several million museum artifacts and archival collections that together with landmark structures are historic treasures. These tangible remains of the cultural history of the people of Pennsylvania are irreplaceable and would be subject to fire, theft, vandalism, mold, water damage and deterioration from lack of maintenance.”

The Senate budget would cut \$4.4 million from general operations in addition to the prudent but necessary reductions proposed in the Governor’s Budget, representing a loss of 25 percent in PHMC funding.

If enacted, the Senate budget bill would necessitate other actions, including:

- Reduction of the hours of operation of the State Archives;
- Discontinuation of operation of the State Records Center;

- Loss of grant assistance to over 320 organizations that provide public programs for over eight million visitors and employ over 3,000 full- and part-time people;
- Elimination of the PHMC's Keystone Grant Program and the loss of 20 to 30 historic rehabilitation projects annually for buildings owned by non-profits and local governments. The value of matching, non-government funds generated by this program is approximately \$15 million; and
- Suspension of the entire state historical marker program and the cancellation of the maintenance and replacement contract for over 2,000 existing markers due to loss of Keystone funding.

For information about the Historical and Museum Commission, visit www.phmc.state.pa.us. For details of Governor Rendell's proposed budget for the 2009-10 fiscal year, visit www.pa.gov.