



December 11, 2013

The Honorable Sally Jewell  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

On behalf of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), I am writing to urge you to work with Congress to find a solution that would allow the United States to continue its participation in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) World Heritage Convention.

As you know, since 1945, the United States has been a contributing member of UNESCO and the World Heritage Fund. The World Heritage Convention is the UNESCO entity responsible for certifying World Heritage sites around the world, including 21 important sites in the United States, like the Grand Canyon, the Redwood National and State parks, the Everglades, Taos Pueblo, the Great Smokey Mountains, and others.

Recently, the United States formally lost its vote in UNESCO due to the non-payment of dues because of a law that prevents the United States' involvement in organizations that grant membership to an entity that does not have internationally recognized attributes of statehood. In 2011, UNESCO added Palestine as a full member, which triggered the law and prevented the U.S. from paying its UNESCO dues. Unfortunately, this non-payment of UNESCO dues could jeopardize the certification of World Heritage sites in the United States, including two recently nominated sites: the Poverty Point site in northeastern Louisiana; and the San Antonio Franciscan Missions.

Designating World Heritage sites, not only helps protect and preserve these important sites and landscapes, it also helps contribute to the local economies where these sites are located. In fact, a [recent study](#) determined that adding the San Antonio Franciscan Missions of Texas to the World Heritage List would have an overall economic impact of \$100 million, add 1,000 new jobs, and bring in an additional \$2 million in hotel tax revenue. Another study in Ohio for proposed World Heritage Sites there had similar results.

Last summer, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed an amendment by Senator Mary Landrieu (LA), which would have allowed a waiver for the United States to pay the portion of its UNESCO dues for the World Heritage Fund. This waiver would not have restored the United States' voting privileges, but it could have helped in supporting the U.S. nominations for World Heritage Sites. Unfortunately, Congress was unable to pass a final

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spending bill that could have included the Landrieu Amendment. However, Congress recently announced an agreement to work on a bipartisan 2-year spending bill, which could present another opportunity to include language to allow the U.S. to pay its dues for the World Heritage Convention.

Once again, as Congress begins work on a new spending bill, I hope that you will be able to work with them on language that would allow the United States' World Heritage Site nominations to move forward. If you need any additional information on this issue or on other issues that impact our nation's historic landscapes, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nancy C. Somerville". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Nancy C. Somerville, Hon. ASLA  
Executive Vice President/CEO