

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 16, 2026

The Honorable Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Vought,

We write to you regarding critical funding for our nation's 62 National Heritage Areas (NHAs) for fiscal year (FY) 2026. In January 2026, President Trump signed into law the *Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior and Environment Appropriations Act, 2026*, which included annual appropriations for NHAs through the National Park Service (NPS) at \$30.985 million. Since this bill was signed into law over five months ago, many NHAs – including the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area (FFNHA), which encompasses much of eastern Kansas and western Missouri – have not received their annual funding (around \$500,000 per NHA) or any continuing resolution funding passed into law prior to January. This comes after FY25 funding for NHAs was significantly delayed with FFNHA not receiving their award until weeks before the end of the last fiscal year.

NHAs are an excellent example of public-private partnerships that preserve our nation's history, showcase our cultural heritage, and boost local economies. With modest federal appropriations, NHAs secure a minimum 100-percent match in nonfederal dollars to provide irreplaceable educational and tourism opportunities. FFNHA tells important stories of American settlement of the western frontier, Bleeding Kansas and the Civil War, *Brown v. Board of Education* and significant figures in our nation's history such as President Harry Truman, Amelia Earhart, and the Native tribes of the Great Plains.

NHAs contribute billions to the U.S. economy annually and support hundreds of thousands of jobs, leveraging each dollar of federal funding into more than \$5 of nonfederal resources. For example, FFNHA provided 54 percent of its FY25 income from nonfederal sources. Our nation's 62 NHAs provide an excellent and sustainable model of economic development at little cost to the federal government and are critical to telling our nation's story amidst the America250 celebration.

These repeated delays in funding are causing significant strain on our NHAs – many of which rely on small staffs and robust volunteer networks; annual NPS appropriations are critical to attracting private donations, planning grants and historic preservation efforts, and executing educational opportunities. FFNHA is facing this shortfall – and on the verge of having to lay off

staff – while servicing a record number of grant applications, providing opportunities to 122 percent more students compared to the last fiscal year, and meeting increased tourism demand from the semiquincentennial and the FIFA World Cup 2026.

We respectfully request that you immediately disburse these FY26 appropriations for NHAs and provide us with an outline of the award process and the reason for these delays. Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

Cc: Jessica Bowron, Acting Director, National Park Service