

Advocacy Letter for Benjamin Harrison Home Improvements

HP 601
University of Kentucky

Advocacy Letter on Funding for Exterior Improvements to Pre. Benjamin Harrison's Home

Letter Explanation

Benjamin Harrison was the 23rd president of the United States of America, and he had an immensely positive impact on the American society. Probably, his most notable contribution was the way he managed to recruit, organize, and command a regiment of volunteers during the Civil War. The mere fact that he was a successful leader with major achievements necessitates the conservation of some of the tools and items that were central in his life as an individual and leader. Arguably, the most significant item would be his home in Indiana, a building was central to most of his important activities. For example, in 1888, Harrison conducted a successful presidential campaign from the front of his home (NPS, N.d.). Another salient point is that when the leader moved to his 16-room home in the 1870s, he managed to establish a prosperous law career. Harrison lived in the house until his death in 1901 (NPS, N.d.). Generally speaking, President Benjamin Harrison's home was a central and important component of his life, which justifies its preservation.

This letter will be sent to Senator Joe Donnelly of Indiana, asking him to support our grant application to the National Park Service. As mentioned earlier, President Harrison's home is located within the jurisdiction of the said leader. It is, therefore, prudent to say that the Senator is best suited for the approval and sourcing of funding for the exterior improvement of the subject residence. What is more, the leader has a direct control on the Historic and Cultural Preservation Office for the Indiana state. It is noteworthy that this proposal may attract interest from many stakeholders with an interest in historic preservation. The most significant parties would be the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Historic and Cultural Preservation Office in Indiana. Other notable stakeholders are the local Indiana residents, who include a significant percentage of natives. With all these interested parties, the proposal is expected to gain traction and support rapidly.

Advocacy Letter

10 June 2018

Senator Joe Donnelly
State of Indiana
123 NW 4th Street, Suite 417
Evansville, IN 47708
www.donnelly.senate.gov/contact/email-joe

RE: Grant Funding for Exterior Improvements to the Pres. Benjamin Harrison Home

Dear Senator Joe Donnelly,

I would like to express my strong support for conducting exterior improvements on President Benjamin Harrison's home to preserve its historical value. The building is amongst the most historically rich buildings in Indiana and the U.S.A. at large, which necessitates its continued preservation. The Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site has recently achieved accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), the highest national recognition afforded the nation's museums.

The history of the building can be traced back to 1854 when Benjamin Harrison first arrived in Indianapolis to start his career as a lawyer. He dedicated a few of his years for military service, after which he purchased a double lot in an auction in 1867. It is worth to note that at the time, the parcel of land was located on the outskirts of town along North Delaware Street, which is currently the I-65 interstate. The house is an Italianate architectural design.

In his presidential race in 1888, President Harrison ran against the incumbent President Grover Cleveland. During that year, Harrison signed his infamous Front Porch Campaign from the porch of his home. The listening crowd would gather on the street facing the building, an activity that defined the popular 'front-porch' speeches. It is, however, worth noting that the actual front porch was built in 1896, which was three years after Harrison left the presidency. As if to stress the importance of the house in his life, the leader died in the master bedroom on March 13, 1901.

After the death of Harrison, his wife, Mary Lord Dimmick Harrison, remained as the sole custodian of the property. However, in 1939, she sold the premises to the Arthur Jordan School of Music that is currently known as the Jordan College of Fine Arts at Butler University. It is prudent to mention that the institution was afforded control over the property over the sole condition that it remained as a memorial for President Benjamin Harrison.

President Harrison's home was made a National Historic Landmark in 1966. The last notable renovations on the premises were conducted in 1974, which made it a full house museum. Specifically, this facility is operated by the Benjamin Harrison Foundation under lease from the Arthur Jordan Foundation.

The Benjamin Harrison House was designed by Herman Brandt with respect to the Italianate Style of Architecture. The edifice still maintains its brick facades, which are depreciating rapidly and, thus, demand renovation. What is more, the house features bracketed cornices, bay windows, oak-trimmed interiors, and parquet floors, to mention a few. The structure is open for tours weekly, with ten of the 16 rooms accessible to the general public. Another pertinent point is that about 75% of the memorabilia in the museum were owned by Harrison and his family. It is, therefore, noteworthy that the exterior improvements on the building would augment the integrity and quality of the building.

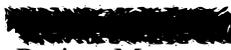
I recognize the challenges that may face the renovation and improvement of a building as rich as the President Harrison's House. Notably, architectural input and design to ensure the effective preservation of the character of the building is an extremely sensitive facet in this respect. I am, , willing to gather all the necessary consultants to oversee the improvements. I believe that developments in the building would add to the value of the landmark significantly. Eventually, this would rank Indiana State as among the jurisdictions with the most well-preserved landmarks, which would ameliorate tourism. The primary purpose of the home and Presidential site is to improve the public's appreciation and understanding of the accomplishments and impact on history of our 23rd President of the United States.

I implore your great leadership and vision for Indiana to fund this project. Improving and preserving President Harrison's House would ensure future generations are able to experience the historical value of this landmark of American architecture and politics.

The funding request for this project is \$795,000. We are seeking grant funding from the Historic Preservation Fund of the National Park Service. Senator Donnelly, we are asking for a letter from you in support of this important project to include with our application for grant funding to the National Park Service.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at 317-545-5901.

Sincerely,



Project Manager

References

NPA (N.d). Benjamin Harrison Home, Indiana. *U.S. Department of the Interior*. Retrieved from https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/presidents/benjamin_harrison_home.html Accessed 5 June 5, 2018.