



Louisiana Landmarks Society

Pitot House • 1440 Moss Street • New Orleans, Louisiana 70119
Phone: 504-482-0312 • www.LouisianaLandmarks.org

July 24, 2026

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
401 F Street NW, Suite 308
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Opposition to the Draft Revisions to 36 CFR Part 800 (Circulated July 17, 2026)

Dear Members of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation,

Louisiana Landmarks Society writes to urge the Council to reject the draft rewrite of the Section 106 regulations circulated on July 17, 2026, and to pursue narrower, more deliberate reform developed with full public input instead.

We do not write as newcomers to this issue. Louisiana Landmarks Society was founded in 1950, and we have spent every one of the seventy-six years since working to protect the historic buildings and neighborhoods that define this state. We led the campaign to save Gallier Hall in our founding year, and less than two decades later were part of the coalition that helped save the French Quarter by stopping the Riverfront Expressway from cutting it off from the Mississippi River — a fight won in no small part because Section 106, then brand new, gave preservationists a legal foothold to argue that the review process had been ignored. We have watched this law work, imperfectly but repeatedly, for three-quarters of a century.

Louisiana has more riding on this than perhaps any other state. So much of our identity, and so much of our tourism economy, is concentrated in one irreplaceable place: the French Quarter and greater New Orleans, alongside a scattering of plantation and Cajun-country heritage sites across the state. Wherever you go in the world, people smile at the mention of New Orleans. Take the city's historic fabric out of Louisiana's economy and the state's brand collapses. We say this because we have spent seventy-six years watching how directly this state's fortunes are tied to its historic places, and how often federal review has been the only thing standing between those places and demolition.

Section 106 rarely works by blocking a project outright. Far more often, it works by forcing negotiation. The 2008 agreement that led to protective "secure and ventilate" work at Charity Hospital, and the case-by-case review that shaped FEMA's post-Katrina demolition decisions across this city, both exist because the law required agencies to slow down, consult, and mitigate rather than act unilaterally.

The July 17 draft would remove the tools that made those outcomes possible: making the "avoid or minimize harm" mandate optional, making public comment discretionary, eliminating the requirement to notify state and local governments, ending mandatory tribal consultation, and excluding significant cultural landscapes from the definition of historic properties. Together, these changes would leave future agencies free to act first, possibly on a whim, and explain later.

We recognize the Council's stated concern with delay is genuine, and we do not dispute that Section 106 review can be made more efficient. But efficiency and elimination are not the same thing.

Expanded programmatic agreements for routine projects, modernized data systems for state historic preservation offices, and clearer standards for judicial review would address delay without removing the public's right to know and be heard before a historic place is harmed.

We would note that Governor Jeff Landry, who represents a state with as much at stake in this process as any in the country, now sits on this Council. We hope he and his fellow members will weigh what Louisiana, and every state with an irreplaceable historic place, stands to lose before this draft is adopted.

We respectfully ask the Council to withdraw this draft, extend the comment period, and pursue reform through a process as transparent as the one Section 106 itself requires of every other federal action. We have spent seventy-six years defending the proposition that these places are worth the trouble of asking first. Once they are lost, it is for good.

Respectfully,



Sandra Stokes
Chair of Advocacy
Louisiana Landmarks Society
225-445-3800