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Journal of Tax Credits™

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HTC Advocacy: Your Voice Matters During Tax Legislation

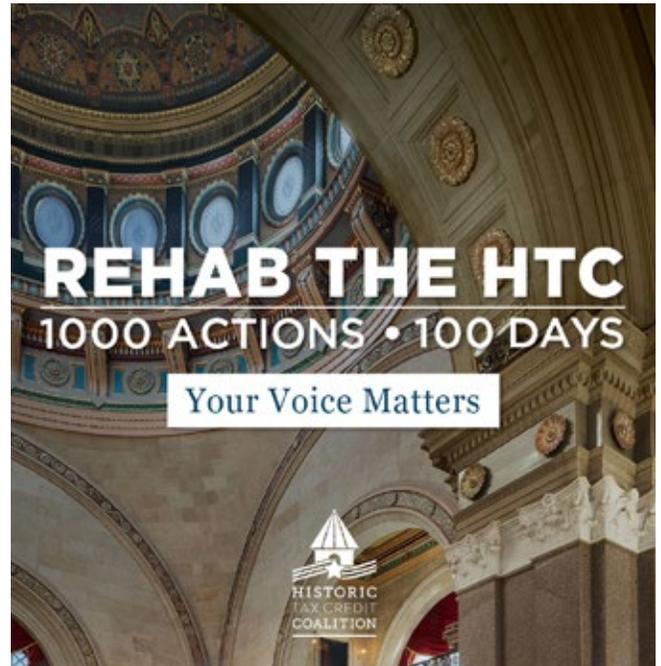
CINDY HAMILTON, HERITAGE CONSULTING GROUP AND
PATRICK ROBERTSON, CONFLUENCE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

As Washington, D.C., heralds the opening of the 119th Congress for its two-year term with Republicans controlling all levers of government, there is significant talk about moving quickly on a Republican-driven bill to extend the Trump-era tax cuts and to enact other Republican priorities.

The Historic Tax Credit Coalition (HTCC) is encouraging historic preservation advocates to join its efforts by reaching out to members of Congress to support these long-overdue improvements to the historic tax credit (HTC). Aside from its change to a five-year credit in 2017, the HTC has not been updated since it was made permanent in 1986. The new tax bill provides an opportunity to modernize the HTC so that it better aligns with other incentives and the current development frameworks to which it is frequently applied.

To that end, the HTCC launched an advocacy effort, Rehab the HTC—1,000 Actions in 100 Days, to encourage stakeholders to voice their support to Congressmembers. This effort encourages members to support provisions in the forthcoming tax bill that will make the federal HTC more valuable and easier to use. HTCC is focused on four key provisions: returning the HTC to a one-year credit, eliminating the basis adjustment, expanding eligibility for the credit by lowering the entrance threshold and enhancing the credit for smaller projects.

Now is the time to make your voice heard by joining the HTCC campaign to contact members of Congress in the first 100 days of the 119th Congress.



Congressional Champions

Even with Republicans controlling both chambers of Congress, the HTC remains a bipartisan program with bipartisan support. This is reflected in our four champions—a Republican and a Democrat in the House and in the Senate. Following several recent retirements, the HTCC has identified new voices in Congress to support the HTC, revamping the slate of Congressional champions for the HTC. The four champions for the 119th Congress have committed to

introducing companion bills in the House and Senate to improve the incentive.

United States Senate

Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-Louisiana: Cassidy is widely credited with saving the HTC when the House eliminated it from a draft version of the tax bill in 2017. Cassidy's longstanding support reflects the credit's use in big cities and rural parishes throughout Louisiana. He was key to convincing his fellow Republican senators to retain the HTC in the final tax bill in 2017. While Cassidy is a doctor by trade, he has become a respected member of the tax-writing Senate's Finance Committee. Cassidy has been the leading Republican champion of the HTC in the Senate for nearly a decade.

Sen. Mark Warner, D-Virginia: With the retirement of Sen. Ben Cardin, D-Maryland, Warner takes over as the HTC's lead Democratic advocate on the Senate Finance Committee. Much like Louisiana, Virginia is regularly one of the top users of the HTC. Warner has seen rehab projects completed in all corners of the Commonwealth, both as a senator and during his term as governor. Warner is widely known as a bipartisan operator in the Senate, as well as a champion of infrastructure investment, which dovetails well with efforts to enhance the HTC.

United States House of Representatives

Rep. Darin LaHood, R, Illinois: LaHood has led efforts to pass the Historic Tax Credit Growth and Opportunity (HTC-GO) Act and is considered the leading Republican on the House Ways and Means Committee supporting the HTC. He has seen the impact of the HTC across his district, which includes Peoria, Rockford, Galena and Bloomington-Normal, as well as surrounding rural communities.

Rep. Tom Suozzi, D-New York: Suozzi will be the lead Democrat on the House Ways and Means

Committee to advocate for expansion of the HTC. He represents a district on Long Island and is beginning his second stint on the tax-writing committee. He still lives in Glen Cove and has seen numerous examples of the HTC's success in his district, throughout New York City and across the state.

How to Make Your Voice Heard

Stakeholders are encouraged to contact our champions as well as the representatives for their home district to encourage support for improvements to the HTC in the forthcoming tax legislation.

To focus messaging, the HTCC has launched the advocacy campaign, Rehab the HTC: 1,000 Actions in 100 Days. The goal is to raise awareness among decision-makers while a bill is being drafted. The 100-day period runs until approximately mid-April, and indications are that Congress will begin work on a tax bill before then.

If you are interested in seeing the HTC retained and improved, join the HTCC in this advocacy effort. Sign up by visiting the HTCC page on LinkedIn. Search for the hashtag #RehabtheHTC for a link. Once registered, the HTCC will send talking points, information for legislative staff in your district, as well as regular updates as the tax bill takes shape.

Next, take action. This can be as simple as emailing your elected officials asking them to support the forthcoming HTC legislation.

If you want to do more, elected officials like to hear about good things happening in their districts.

- Share a story about a successfully completed rehab that would not have happened without the HTC.
- Talk about job creation, new housing and economic synergy sparked by an HTC project.

- Tell them how the proposed HTC improvements would make a project viable or enhance your community.
- Invite them to visit a rehab project—completed or under construction—the next time they are home.
- If you use social media, share these stories more broadly with the hashtag #RehabtheHTC. Encourage other stakeholders to take action, too.

Now Is The Time

Join the industry campaign 1,000 Actions in 100 Days to be part of this effort to make the first meaningful improvements to the program in decades and help shape the future of the HTC. Your voice matters and now is the time to act. ;

Cindy Hamilton is president of Heritage Consulting Group. Patrick Robertson is the principal of Confluence Government Relations, a full-service government affairs and business advisory firm based in Washington, D.C.

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