

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Robert C. Byrd
FROM: Kurt Dodd and Franz Wuerfmannsdobbler
SUBJECT: Background — Wheeling National Heritage Area
DATE: January 26, 2000

We understand that tomorrow you may be seeing Mayor Jack Lipphardt of Wheeling, who is in Washington to attend a meeting of mayors. This memo provides background information regarding the Wheeling National Heritage Area project. Two points that may be of primary interest to Mayor Lipphardt are (1) your adding of \$3.37 million to the Interior bill for the Wheeling National Heritage area, and (2) your making of preliminary queries as to the options and opportunities for sponsoring legislation that would be referred to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to authorize the Wheeling National Heritage Area.

To date, you have secured a total of \$18.77 million (including \$3.37 million for FY 2000) in appropriations through the Interior bill for investments and ongoing technical assistance for the Wheeling Heritage Area. The single largest project out of this total is the \$5.1 million spent on the Artisan Center, which is located downtown and adjacent to the Robert C. Byrd intermodal transportation facility funded through the Transportation bill (\$9.1 million) which you dedicated last June. This intermodal facility houses a visitor center with displays (funded by the Wheeling National Heritage Area) about the history of transportation in Wheeling and its importance to the nation. This center is operated on a cooperative basis by the heritage area and the city's visitor and convention bureau.

For FY 1998, you secured \$480,000 (an increase of \$300,000 above the previous year's budget) to continue ongoing technical support for Wheeling's efforts to enhance understanding and appreciation of the city's history. For FY 1999, you secured a total of \$1,000,000 in funds, \$400,000 in operational funds to support the heritage corporation and special projects such as exhibits for Independence Hall and \$600,000 in construction funding so that phase I of the Heritage Port project could proceed. For FY 2000 you added \$594,000 for operations (including the development of exhibits at a children's museum and interpretations of Victorian architecture) and \$2,775,000 for construction to complete phase I of the Heritage Port project, begin restoration of the waterfront

area south of Wheeling Creek, and support renovations of the Wilson Lodge at Oglebay Park.

In addition to the construction of the Artisan Center, the Wheeling National Heritage Area funds have been used for activities such as: lighting efforts to highlight better Wheeling's historic architecture; partnerships with various groups (the Center Market, local schools, the WV Independence Hall); oral histories; audio tours; and ongoing administrative support for the project. The National Park Service remains an active partner with the city in supporting efforts to make more people aware of Wheeling's heritage. The FY 1999 funds were requested by the Wheeling National Heritage Area to provide interpretive programs, particularly in conjunction with West Virginia Independence Hall and Wheeling's role in the issue of secession and statehood and West Virginia's role in the Civil War.

For FY 2000, at the request of the Wheeling National Heritage Area, you requested a total of \$600,000 in operation funds and \$9,830,000 in construction funds for Wheeling in the Interior bill. The Senate-passed bill included \$1,000,000 in operations funds and \$5,000,000 in construction funds. The conference report for the Interior bill included \$600,000 in operation funds and \$3,000,000 in construction funds. These amounts were slightly reduced due to the 0.38 rescission, so that the enacted level for Wheeling was \$594,000 for operations and \$2,775,000 for construction.

The completion of the intermodal center allowed the wharf garage along the Ohio River to be removed. This garage blocked access and views of the Ohio River in downtown Wheeling. Its removal, which is complete, and the follow-up restoration and enhancement activities where it stood are the center piece of the phase I Heritage Port project. To date, about \$2 million in federal funds have been provided for this project. A \$1.6 million construction contract has been awarded to complete the sheet piling, fill, and basic infrastructure for the heritage port. An additional \$1.6 million is needed for landscaping, terracing, lighting, and paving to complete the phase I project. The Wheeling National Heritage Area Corporation met with the Corps to discuss their potential involvement in this and additional waterfront efforts, which would require a cost-sharing commitment from the city. I understand that the city is not prepared to consider such a cost-sharing arrangement at this time. For FY 2000, you secured \$100,000 in the Energy and Water Development bill for the Army Corps of Engineers to provide an objective review the Wheeling restoration plans, and identify any future

opportunities for the Corps to participate in this effort.

The full Heritage Port project was originally estimated to cost about \$16 million. Its design is such that the total project can be done in several phases. One desire is to make improvements to the street area (Water Street) immediately adjacent to the riverfront park area so that festivals and other activities could be held in this area. Another major component would be to establish a "grand staircase", fountains, seating, and landscaping at the end of 14th Street in front of the civic center at the river's edge. Other improvements would be along and south of Wheeling Creek (walkways, wooden decks, landscaping, lighting, etc).

In conference deliberations regarding the FY 2000 Interior bill, Chairman Regula said that the House would not support any future funding for the Wheeling National Heritage Area until the area is authorized by Congress. A statement to this effect was placed in the statement of the conference managers that accompanies the FY 2000 Interior bill. Given the current position of the House, it appears that securing funds for the Wheeling National Heritage Area in FY 2001 will be difficult without authorizing legislation. Seven years ago you introduced legislation to authorize the Wheeling National Heritage Area. This effort failed in the House and no further authorization has been considered since that time. Earlier this month, your staff held preliminary meetings with the National Park Service, staff of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (the authorizing committee), and the Wheeling National Heritage Area Corporation to explore current options and opportunities regarding authorization of the Wheeling National Heritage area. Upon receipt and review of draft authorizing legislation provided by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, your staff will provide you with a separate memo laying out several options and their positive and negative features for your consideration.

Please let us know if we can provide you with any additional information.

cc: Ann Adler

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