



Letter to the Editor

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State Budget Axe Falls On Illinois Historic Sites

Close to half of the state's historic sites will close on October 1, the result of recent budget cuts by Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich's administration this past week. Topping the list was Frank Lloyd Wright's Dana Thomas House in Springfield—one of the acclaimed architect's best known residential designs. The irony of this particular closing was that millions of tax-payers' money was put into this home during the late 80s for its acquisition, restoration and eventual opening to the public in 1990.

Other closed sites range from the grand Victorian David Davis House, to three buildings in Bishop Hill and even the state's first capital building in Vandalia. The administration did decide to keep open almost all Lincoln-related sites in an effort to avoid embarrassment during next year's Lincoln Bicentennial.

Our office is hearing from travelers who arrive at the doorstep of Illinois historic sites only to find signs stating "Closed due to budget cuts." The impact of that very scene is devastating not only now, but for the future. Immediate tourism revenue and economic viability of the state and local communities are impacted. Long term, the education of our children and ability to recapture travelers' attention and dollars are affected. The dominos will continue to fall.

Many of these sites already suffer from deferred maintenance. With no staff to care for them, or a capital budget for support, these sites will slowly begin to crumble. Each one has its own individual history and architectural relevance. They are places of pride for communities and destinations for thousands, not line-items in a grand budget quickly cut for immediate financial relief.

We urge everyone to call or write their state legislators and the Governor to let them know closing Illinois historic sites is not an option. Tell them to reconsider before our great state's history deteriorates and becomes nothing but pictures in textbooks.

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Landmarks Illinois is the state's leading voice for historic preservation. Since its founding in 1971, the 2,500-member statewide organization has gone on to save countless architectural and historic treasures throughout Illinois. Landmarks Illinois' mission today focuses on saving buildings, facilitating preservation, and educating the public through innovative programs and promotion. For more information, visit www.Landmarks.org.

Landmarks Illinois operates and manages legendary architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House located in Plano, Illinois. The house is open to visitors weekly, Tuesday – Sunday, April through November, and is one of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 29 nation-wide sites. For more information, visit www.FarnsworthHouse.org.