

Historic Preservation: Site closings undecided

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Budget cuts to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency have prompted worries that state historic sites could be closed, agency spokesman said Wednesday those concerns are premature.

In trimming more than \$1 billion out of a state budget that he said was about \$2 billion out of balance, Gov. F. Q. C. \$2.8 million from a fund that pays for historic-site workers. The \$2.8 million reduction represents half of the n

“We know that this will mean a significant impact on all of our state historic sites,” said IHPA spokesman David Blanchette. “What that impact will be as it pertains to each individual site. But we’ve been carefully examining the situation in the near future.”

According to one widespread rumor, historic sites are closing Aug. 1. The rumor is false, Blanchette said.

While the budget cut is “obviously devastating,” he said, it is too soon to say “that this one or that one will close or have reductions in operational hours. We just can’t be that specific yet.”

Site closures and reduced hours “are two alternatives that are being examined,” he said.

Rep. Raymond Poe, R-Springfield, worries that budget cuts at historic sites would affect tourism. Tourists would travel miles only to find that the historic site they want to visit is closed, he said.

“I think (the possibility is) real because that happened already in the past,” he said.

In 2002, state budget cuts forced reduced hours at many historic sites.

Steve Holden, site superintendent at the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site in Galesburg, fears that the famous site could be hit because of the budget reductions this go-round.

“I think we are, I hate to say it, probably one of the more likely ones because we’re one of the smaller state historic sites at the site since 1990.

Mike Wendel, administrator of the Bishop Hill Heritage Association, is passing out petitions urging the restoration of the Bishop Hill Historic Site.

Bishop Hill, northeast of Galesburg, is recognized nationally and internationally for its unique Swedish herita

Wendel also sent out a news release this week that claimed the Illinois House would vote today on the "pos the one at Bishop Hill and Sandburg's birthplace.

The House, however, went home Wednesday and canceled its session today. It considered restoring some have been able to address the historic-site funding because that item was included in a Senate bill. Procedu Senate to take action first.

Wendel later softened his stance, saying Wednesday afternoon: "I've got to stop the gloom-and-dooming."

"I'm hoping things will resolve themselves," he added. "I hope (the sites) can continue to operate as they ha

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