



Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota

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Members of the House: Sheldon Johnson (DFL – 67B) – Chair **Members of the Senate:** David Senjem (R – 25); Patricia Torres Ray (DFL – 63)
State Agency Appointees: Paul Hugunin – Agriculture, Scott Bradley – Transportation, Adam Johnson – Explore Minnesota Tourism, Keith Parker – Natural Resources, Andrea Kajer – Historical Society **Regional Appointees:** Nancy Salminen – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids, Open – Grand Rapids to Brainerd, Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River, Cordelia Pierson – Elk River to Hastings, Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border **Member at Large:** Anne Lewis

DRAFT FOR CONSIDERATION 8-31-17 – Update to letters (amounts, date) provided February 2016 and February 2017

Senator David H. Senjem, Chair
Senate Capital Investment Committee
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3401
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Dean Urdahl, Chair
House Capital Investment Committee
473 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Senjem and Representative Urdahl:

At the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers, Historic Fort Snelling is Minnesota's first National Historic Landmark. The Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission works to preserve, promote and enhance these scenic, historic and recreational resources of the Mississippi River corridor in Minnesota. We support the Minnesota Historical Society's capital budget request for \$30 million for construction work to revitalize the visitor experience at Historic Fort Snelling and were pleased that funding for design was provided last session. The project will replace inadequate infrastructure and expand the stories told at the site, both promoting and enhancing a top historic resource for the corridor.

This project particularly aligns with our goal of placemaking in the corridor. At the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, the area has a human history reaching back some 10,000 years. The new visitor center and other outdoor improvements will connect visitors with more of the site's many stories.

We are also excited about the project's potential to more directly connect visitors to the river. The site's perch atop the bluff overlooking the river confluence is currently underutilized, but the new visitor center in the historic cavalry barracks and improvements to wayfinding will draw visitors closer to the river. The inspiring view and new interpretive opportunities will better incorporate the role of the river within the stories told at the fort.

Historic Fort Snelling is also designated as a National Great River Road Interpretive Center. It is one of twelve in Minnesota and 70+ in the ten Mississippi River states. These are places recognized for their remarkable river stories, and recommended to all GRR travelers.

Thank you for considering this request. It is most timely as 2020 marks Historic Fort Snelling's bicentennial. For the revitalization to be ready in time, the remaining \$30 million in state funding for construction must be approved in the 2018 session.

Sincerely,

Rep. Sheldon Johnson, Chair