



**National Trust for
Historic Preservation**

Save the past. Enrich the future.

February 15, 2017

The Honorable Lee Beyer, Chair
Senate Committee on Business and Transportation
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE, Room 453
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SUPPORT for SB 256, Establishing Willamette Falls Locks Commission

Dear Chairman Beyer and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, we offer our enthusiastic support for SB 256, which creates a State Commission for the Willamette Falls Locks.

The National Trust is a private, non-profit corporation that helps people protect, enhance, and enjoy the places that matter to them. Chartered by Congress in 1949, the National Trust protects and defends America's historic resources, furthers the historic preservation policy of the United States, and facilitates public participation in the preservation of our nation's diverse heritage.

The Willamette Falls Navigation Canal and Locks, completed in 1873, is among the oldest locks systems in the nation and very much a part of our nation's heritage. The Locks were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, and form the centerpiece of the State-designated Willamette Falls Heritage Area. It was the first multi-lift navigational locks in the United States, and remained the oldest continuously operating multi-lock system in the nation until its closure in 2011 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

The Willamette Falls Locks were placed in caretaker status by the USACE because of structural safety concerns, preventing future usage of the facility. The following year, the National Trust named Willamette Falls Locks a "National Treasure," with the goal of bringing new focus and resources to local and statewide efforts to repair the historic Willamette Falls Navigation Canal and Locks and reopen them for commerce, recreation, and tourism.

Creation of a State Commission would further organize leadership of efforts to repair and reopen the Locks and allow the State, Metro, Clackamas County, the City of West Linn, the National Trust, and local advocacy and business interests to work in unison as solutions are identified in coordination with the USACE. Establishment of a State Commission for the Willamette Falls Locks would demonstrate the strong commitment to the future of this National Treasure that serves the interests and needs of communities along the Willamette River and all Oregonians.

We urge a "yes" vote for SB 256.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shaw Sprague, Jr.", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Shaw Sprague, Jr.
Director, Government Relations and Policy