

FAQs for Centennial Act Provisions

With President Barack Obama's December 16 signing of the National Park Service Centennial Act, the position of ACHP chairman converts from a part-time to a full-time position and adds the General Chairman of the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (NATHPO) to the voting membership of the ACHP. Here are some questions and answers about the legislation and the transition.

What does the legislation do?

The legislation converts the current presidentially appointed, part-time chairman to a full-time position appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. It makes the General Chairman of NATHPO a formal, voting member of the ACHP. The legislation also includes a number of technical amendments to the ACHP's internal structure to take into account the change in status of the chairman and the addition of a voting member.

Who sought this legislation?

The ACHP initiated the proposal for the full-time chairman, stemming from recommendations coming out of the Preserve America Summit in 2006 on ways to improve the leadership of the federal preservation program. The provision was also endorsed in 2011 by the Federal Historic Preservation Program Task Force, which undertook a study to determine ways to improve the overall program. The task force included all the major national historic preservation organizations. The current chairman of the ACHP advocated for the NATHPO provision, and both were included in a draft bill the ACHP sent to Congress.

When do the provisions regarding the chairman take effect?

The legislation specifies that the full-time position commences on January 20, 2017. The position has a four-year term, just like the term of the current chairman and other appointed members of the ACHP.

Does the current chairman assume the full-time position?

No. The legislation provides that the current part-time chairman serves until his successor is appointed and confirmed.

How soon might a full-time chairman actually take office?

That is difficult to say. With the advent of a new presidential Administration, many appointments across government must be made, and the priority obviously goes to major departments. In past transitions, the new Administration has usually been in office for at least six months before an ACHP chairman has been appointed. Given the conversion of the position to full-time, it may move up in the appointments queue, but Senate confirmation will take additional time.

Does the full-time chairman serve a term of four years from the date of appointment?

No. As with current terms for most appointed ACHP members, the term commences at a specified date and proceeds to run to its specified end date. When the chairman takes office, he or she will enter into a term that ends on January 20, 2021.

Can the full-time chairman be reappointed?

Yes, for an additional four-year term. That appointment would also be subject to Senate confirmation.

What is the pay level of the full-time chairman?

The position is in the Executive Schedule at Level V. The current annual salary for that level is set at \$150,200.

When do the provisions respecting the General Chairman of NATHPO take effect?

They became effective when the bill was signed into law by the President on December 16, 2016. The General Chairman of NATHPO became a member without any further action needed by the President or the ACHP. Like other ex officio members, the General Chairman of NATHPO can name designees to represent her on the ACHP.

What other changes for the ACHP does the legislation make?

There are provisions that make technical adjustments in the change from 23 to 24 ACHP members, such as the quorum requirement shifting from 12 to 13 members. Furthermore, the executive director will now report to the chairman rather than to the full council membership.

What must the ACHP do to accommodate the amendments?

Primarily the membership will need to update the ACHP's Operating Procedures to reflect the change in the status of the chairman and the addition of NATHPO as a voting member. There are additional internal administrative adjustments to be made, most notably defining the respective responsibilities of the chairman and the executive director.