



The World Archaeological Congress

Please reply to:

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The Honourable Jon Huntsman, Jr
Governor
Utah State Capitol Complex
East Office Building, Suite E220
Salt Lake City, UT 84114
Via FAX: 801 538 1528

Dear Governor Huntsman

The World Archaeological Congress (WAC) wishes to express its views about the legislation pending before the Utah House of Representatives that will affect the state's archaeological standing.

The World Archaeological Congress is an international organization which represents professional archaeologists in tertiary institutions, museums, government agencies and the private sector from more than 90 countries. It seeks to promote interest in the past in all countries, to encourage the development of regionally based histories and international academic interaction, and has a particular interest in:

- education about the past;
- archaeology and indigenous peoples;
- the ethics of archaeological enquiry;
- the protection of sites and objects of the past;
- the effects of archaeology on host communities;
- the ownership, conservation and exploitation of the archaeological heritage; and
- the application of new technologies in archaeology and in archaeological communication.

While WAC supports the Cultural Sites Protection Amendments, H.B. 311, with its focus on protection of Utah's antiquities and cultural resources, there is grave concern about H.B. 139. WAC believes that this legislation will have a negative effect on the present and future status of the state's archeological research and practice, and its record in preserving historic resources. The legislation will result in the removal of the position of the State Archaeologist, and the excavation permitting authority currently vested in the Antiquities Section will transfer to the Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office. By eliminating the requirement that an archaeologist be listed in the Register of Professional Archaeologists, the state increases the likelihood that unqualified archaeologists will make decisions that compromise the historic record of Utah at the same time restricting the public's ability to hold archaeologists accountable for such decisions. WAC believes that these actions will result in a deficit in the quality of advice and standards in state archaeological matters.

WAC does not see any advantage in the intent of HB 139 in the protection of the state's archaeological resources. The administrative changes will result in considerable loss of archaeological and scientific knowledge and expertise currently held by staff in the Antiquities Section. The need to undertake quality reviews of archaeological permit applications and excavation reports for appropriately qualified staff is self-evident. Archaeological fieldwork requires the highest of standards in any context, and particularly in situations where the state is responsible for the preservation of historic property and archaeological sites.

In assessing the need for H.B. 139, WAC urges the legislature to work with historic preservation professionals to develop course of action that is an alternative to threatening the protection of archaeological sites in the state.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Claire Smith
President
World Archaeological Congress