

ISSUE BRIEF

Protecting African American Burial Grounds

ACRA Position

Congress should provide \$3 million to the National Park Service for the new African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program in fiscal year 2026 in order to help protect and preserve African American burial grounds.

Background

African American burial grounds are a vital part of our nation's heritage. They are the resting places of countless former enslaved individuals, freedmen, civil rights champions, military veterans, community leaders and beloved family members.

From the early days of our Republic to the Jim Crow era, African American families were often barred from burying their loved ones in White cemeteries. Large numbers of African American burial sites lack any official record of their existence, and many have been neglected and abused over time. This has effectively erased the memory of countless Americans whose history deserves to be told. In many areas of the country, burial grounds are the only tangible properties that represent African American culture and heritage.

Congress recognized the importance of identifying and protecting these sacred sites in 2022 when it authorized the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program. This program supports efforts to research, identify, document, preserve, and interpret historic African American burial grounds, many of which have been badly neglected or lost to history.

Authorizing this program was an important first step – but Congress has yet to appropriate funding for it. Now Congress needs to ensure the program has financial support it needs to embark on this vital work. ACRA urges Congress to provide \$3 million to African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program in fiscal year 2026, which will help honor the legacy of countless Americans whose stories are an integral part of our nation's heritage.

About the American Cultural Resources Association

ACRA is the national trade association supporting and promoting the common interests of cultural resource management (CRM) firms of all sizes, types and specialties. Member firms undertake much of the legally mandated CRM studies and investigations in the United States.

For more information, contact ACRA at info@acra-crm.org.