

For Immediate Release

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Statement from the Allegheny Conference on Community Development

(PITTSBURGH - March 19, 2009) - The Allegheny Conference on Community Development issued a statement following the meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) yesterday:

The Commonwealth's budget realities have put the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) and our community in an untenable situation. We were extremely disappointed to hear that the Commission is considering recommendations to close the Fort Pitt Museum and the Bushy Run Battlefield visitors center if alternative means to operate them cannot be found. Both of these sites are an essential part of our region's history as a gateway to the west and to greater opportunity.

"While we recognize the need to radically rethink how the state and its communities operate historic and other facilities, closing the doors is not the right solution," said Bill Flanagan, executive vice president, corporate affairs and executive director of Pittsburgh 250.

During this decade, through the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the French and Indian War, our community has made an investment of tens of millions of dollars in improved sites throughout our region. We have created a world class heritage tourism destination. We have marketed these improvements through a variety of media to encourage heritage tourism. Ft. Pitt and Bushy Run are critical elements of this effort.

As we approached the 250th anniversary of the naming of our region in 2008, we supported the Riverlife Task Force's efforts to create a new master plan for Point State Park and last year we welcomed an unprecedented investment in the renovation and rehabilitation of the Park, the home of Ft. Pitt.

Pittsburgh's story began at the Forks of the Ohio, and the Fort Pitt Museum plays an indispensable role telling that story. Bushy Run is poised to celebrate its own 250th in 2013, the anniversary of Pontiac's Rebellion, another milestone in the keystone role our region played in the making of America.

The financial challenges posed by the Governor's proposed budget provide a unique opportunity to identify the solution that works for these sites and our region. We've come too far in creating and promoting a world class heritage experience to give up the ground we've gained.

"We welcome the opportunity to speak at the upcoming PHMC public hearings and in other venues. We will express our strong support for finding alternative approaches to maintaining these two sites in a fiscally responsible manner," said Flanagan.

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The Allegheny Conference on Community Development and Affiliates – the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, the Pennsylvania Economy League of Southwestern Pennsylvania and the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance – work in collaboration with public and private sector partners to stimulate economic growth and improve the quality of life in southwestern Pennsylvania. For more information, visit www.alleghenyconference.org.