

Congresswoman Betty McCollum
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McCollum Announces \$150,000 for Historic Landmark in St. Paul

Federal funding will provide safety upgrades for CSPS Sokol Hall

Washington, DC - Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) announced the CSPS Hall of Sokol Minnesota will receive \$150,000 in federal funding for safety upgrades as a result of President Obama signing the Interior and Environment Appropriations bill into law last week. Sokol Hall, which is a designated historical site, serves as a community center of Czech and Slovak immigrants in St. Paul's West Seventh Street neighborhoods. The funds will come from the Save America's Treasures Account of the National Park Service.

"The Sokol Hall is a St. Paul treasure that has served our community for over a century. I want to make sure these federal dollars are available to this important historic building so it will be protected for future generations to enjoy," said Congresswoman McCollum.

The federal funds will make it possible for Sokol Minnesota to pay for historically appropriate safety improvements, including installing fire sprinklers on the top two floors and enhancing the accessibility of the first floor of Sokol Hall. The building contains the oldest national hall and theater in Minnesota and remains the oldest Czech-Slovak cultural center in the United States. Long standing fire prevention inefficiencies have resulted in Sokol Hall being the sole survivor among twelve original buildings in St. Paul.

Joe Landsberger, President of Sokol Minnesota said, "Sokol Minnesota is deeply honored by the efforts of Congresswoman Betty McCollum to contribute to the preservation of the C.S.P.S. Sokol Hall, and validation of its efforts to restore, renovate and refurbish its national treasure. We are pressed by the loss to fire and demolition of national halls throughout the United States, including 25 of our own, and even our very first. The descendants of early Czech and Slovak immigrants as well as neighbors and citizens of St. Paul, Minnesota and the US have drawn inspiration from the Sokol philosophy of physical, cultural and intellectual fitness. With our history on the same property for over 130 years, we are honored and empowered by this grant to continue responsible stewardship of our history and our building, and grow our programs that a safe and functional facility will make possible."

The Department of the Interior and Environment Appropriations conference report that Congress passed, and President Obama signed, funds the cleanup of dangerous toxic waste sites, reduces air and water pollution, encourages energy efficiency, promotes the development of renewable clean energy sources, and supports the arts, humanities and historical preservation. The new law, P.L. 111-88, was enacted on October 30, 2009.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-4) serves on the House Appropriations & Budget Committees.