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PRESS RELEASE

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TCPA STATEMENT ON U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM UNESCO

The Tennessee Council for Professional Archaeology (TCPA) joins major archaeological and cultural resources organizations in the United States in opposing the current U.S. administration's decision to withdraw from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Through its World Heritage List and international treaties, UNESCO seeks to preserve sites of outstanding archaeological, historical, cultural, or natural significance worldwide. UNESCO's World Heritage List includes such sites as the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt, Notre-Dame Cathedral in France, Early Christian Monuments in Italy, Australia's Great Barrier Reef, Machu Picchu in Peru, the pre-hispanic city of Teotihuacan in Mexico, not to mention sites in the United States like Mesa Verde and Chaco Canyon, Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks, the Statue of Liberty, Monticello, and Independence Hall, among many others. You can view the entire World Heritage List at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>.

World Heritage sites in Tennessee and surrounding states include the Great Smoky Mountains and Mammoth Cave National Parks, both recognized for their natural, cultural, and historical importance. UNESCO works with member states to develop conservation plans, deliver technical assistance and training, and provide emergency assistance for World Heritage sites that face immediate danger, not unlike the forest fires that ravaged parts of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 2016. Withdrawing from UNESCO deprives these sites and the nearly two dozen other World Heritage sites in the United States from support and assistance needed to ensure their preservation for future generations of Americans and citizens of the world.

The TCPA urges the Trump administration to reconsider their position on UNESCO and work together with individuals and organizations at all levels of government, domestically and internationally, to find solutions to the threats facing World Heritage sites. While the withdrawal doesn't take effect until late 2018, the TCPA encourages Tennesseans and all Americans to contact their Congressional representatives to advocate for the renewal of the United States' member status in UNESCO and support its efforts to preserve archaeological, historical, cultural, and natural sites of global importance.

The Tennessee Council for Professional Archaeology is a non-profit mutual benefit corporation organized in 1992 to facilitate, assist, and advocate for professionalism in the field of archaeology in the state of Tennessee, and to promote archaeological awareness and stewardship of our past.