



May 12, 2014

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
207 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
B-71 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Ryan and Ranking Member Van Hollen:

The American Alliance of Museums and 66 undersigned national, regional and state museum organizations write to express serious concerns about the Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Budget Resolution as adopted by the U.S. House of Representatives on April 10, 2014.

We certainly understand the difficult budgetary environment and the challenges it presents, but we want to remind members of Congress that funding for museums is a direct investment in public education, our national heritage and the economic vitality of communities. Museums employ nearly half a million workers and directly contribute at least \$21 billion to the U.S. economy and billions more through indirect spending by their visitors. Museums also invest \$2 billion annually in educational programming, with the typical museum devoting three-quarters of its education budget to K-12 students.

We are especially concerned about some of the report language that accompanied the budget resolution, this year and in recent years. Specifically,

- The budget report states, “The Federal Institute of Museum and Library Services is an independent agency that makes grants to museums and libraries. This is not a core federal responsibility. This function can be funded at the state and local level and augmented significantly by charitable contributions from the private sector.” **We disagree. IMLS provides key funding for education, collections stewardship, digitization, and public programming. Further, it should be noted that each time a federal grant is awarded, additional local and private funds are also leveraged. Two-thirds of IMLS grantees report that their Museums for America grant had positioned the museum to receive additional private funding.**
- The budget report states, “Federal subsidies for the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting can no longer be justified. The activities and content funded by these agencies go beyond

the core mission of the federal government. These agencies can raise funds from private-sector patrons, which will also free them from any risk of political interference.” **We disagree. The NEA and NEH provide vital funds to preserve museum collections and make historical artifacts available to the public through programs, exhibits and digitization. The nonprofit arts industry generates over \$29 billion in annual tax revenues at all levels of government, more than seven times the level of investment. Further, these statements confuse the role of the public and private sectors. Museums and other cultural organizations already raise funds—at least one-third of their budgets—from private-sector patrons. Federal dollars, by contrast, are strictly controlled by Congress, which directs them towards purely public purposes, with an emphasis on making arts available to the broadest possible audience and removing barriers such as price and location that currently limit participation. We object to the notion that there is a "risk" of "political interference"; by contrast, recommendations on funding are made by panels of private-sector peers and experts, a system that the Budget Committee ought to praise and defend.**

- The budget report states, “[T]wo education exchange accounts intended to encourage mutual understanding between Americans and citizens around the world through scholarship and leadership programs...are a non-essential component of the foreign-affairs budget and should be reduced accordingly...” **We disagree. The importance of building a citizenry capable of engaging across national borders cannot be overstated, and educational exchange programs are perfectly positioned to build these cross-cultural relationships. Exhibitions and informal educational opportunities – both here and abroad – increase cross-cultural competency for everyone involved. U.S. citizens learn about the culture and traditions of peoples throughout the world. Citizens of other countries learn about the U.S. through face-to-face engagement, as opposed to the images and stories that are portrayed through the media.**

We do appreciate the sentiment that private giving should be encouraged, though we believe this is true not as a *substitute* for federal funding, but as a vital complement to it. To this end we urge Congress to preserve the full scope and value of the charitable deduction and support additional charitable giving incentives such as the IRA charitable rollover to indeed promote increased charitable giving.

We urge you to recognize the valuable contributions of museums to every community across the nation, and to reconsider this language, which diminishes the role that federal

Letter to House Budget Chairman Ryan and Ranking Member Van Hollen
May 12, 2014
Page Three

agencies such as IMLS, NEH and NEA play in invigorating communities and promoting lifelong learning. These are indeed core federal responsibilities.

Sincerely,

American Alliance of Museums
American Association for State and Local History
American Institute for Conservation
American Public Gardens Association
Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums
Association of Academic Museums and Galleries
Association of African American Museums
Association of Art Museum Directors
Association of Children's Museums
Association of Science Museum Directors
Association of Science-Technology Centers
Association of Tourist Railroads & Railway Museums
Association of Zoos and Aquariums
Council of American Jewish Museums
Museum Store Association
Museum Trustee Association
National Humanities Alliance

Association of Midwest Museums
Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums
Mountain-Plains Museums Association
New England Museums Association
Southeastern Museums Conference
Western Museums Association

Alabama Museums Association
Arkansas Museums Association
Association of Indiana Museums
Association of King County (WA) Historical Organizations
Association of South Dakota Museums
California Association of Museums
Colorado-Wyoming Association of Museums
Connecticut League of History Organizations
Delaware Museum Association
Florida Association of Museums

Letter to House Budget Chairman Ryan and Ranking Member Van Hollen
May 12, 2014
Page Four

Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries
Hawaii Museums Association
Idaho Association of Museums
Illinois Association of Museums
Illinois Heritage Association
Iowa Museum Association
Kansas Museums Association
Kentucky Museum and Heritage Alliance
Maine Archives and Museums
Maryland Association of History Museums
Michigan Museums Association
Minnesota Association of Museums
Mississippi Museums Association
Missouri Association for Museums and Archives
Museum Association of Arizona
Museum Association of New York
Museums Alaska
Museums Association of Montana
Museums in North Dakota
Nebraska Museums Association
Nevada Museums Association
New Jersey Association of Museums
Ohio Museums Association
Oklahoma Museums Association
Oregon Museums Association
PA Museums
South Carolina Federation of Museums
Tennessee Association of Museums
Texas Association of Museums
Utah Museum Association
Virginia Association of Museums
Washington Museum Association
West Virginia Association of Museums
Wisconsin Federation of Museums