

**Testimony of  
Ford W. Bell, DVM,  
President of the American Association of Museums,  
[www.aam-us.org](http://www.aam-us.org)  
to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Labor, HHS and Education and Related Agencies  
in Support of Funding for the  
IMLS Office of Museum Services  
April 27, 2012**

Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Shelby, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to submit this testimony. My name is Ford Bell and I serve as President of the American Association of Museums (AAM). I also submit this testimony on behalf of the larger museum community – including the American Association for State and Local History, the Association of Art Museum Directors, the Association of Children’s Museums, the American Public Gardens Association, and Heritage Preservation – to request that the Subcommittee make a renewed investment in museums in FY13. We urge your support for \$50 million for the Office of Museum Services (OMS) at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

AAM is proud to represent the full range of our nation's museums – including aquariums, art museums, botanic gardens, children’s museums, culturally specific museums, historic sites, history museums, maritime museums, military museums, natural history museums, planetariums, presidential libraries, science and technology centers, and zoos, among others – along with the professional staff and volunteers who work for and with museums. AAM is proud to work on behalf of the 17,500 museums that employ 400,000 people, spend more than \$2 billion annually on K-12 educational programming, receive more than 90 million visits each year from primary and secondary school students, and contribute more than \$20 billion to local economies.

IMLS is the primary federal agency that supports the nation’s museums, and OMS awards grants to help museums digitize, enhance and preserve their collections; provide teacher training; and create innovative, cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary programs and exhibits for schools and the public. The 2012-2016 IMLS Strategic Plan lists clear priorities: placing the learner at the center of the museum experience, promoting museums as strong community anchors, supporting museum stewardship of their collections, advising the President and Congress on how to sustain and increase public access to information and ideas, and serving as a model independent federal agency maximizing value for the American public. IMLS is indeed a model federal agency.

In late 2010, a bill to reauthorize IMLS for five years was enacted (by voice vote in the House and unanimous consent in the Senate). The bipartisan reauthorization included several provisions proposed by the museum field, including enhanced support for conservation and preservation, emergency preparedness and response, and statewide capacity building. The reauthorization also specifically supports efforts at the State level to leverage museum resources, including statewide needs assessments and the development of State plans to improve and maximize museum services throughout the State. The bill (now Public Law 111-340) authorized

\$38.6 million for the IMLS Office of Museum Services to meet the growing demand for museum programs and services. The FY12 appropriation of \$30,859,000 – equal to President Obama’s FY13 budget request – represents a nearly 15% decrease from the FY10 appropriation of \$35,212,000. We urge the subcommittee to provide \$50 million for the IMLS Office of Museum Services.

To be clear, museums are essential in our communities for many reasons:

- Museums are key education providers. Museums already offer educational programs in math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography, and social studies, in coordination with state and local curriculum standards. Museums also provide experiential learning opportunities, STEM education, youth training, and job preparedness. They reach beyond the scope of instructional programming for schoolchildren by also providing critical teacher training. There is a growing consensus that whatever the new educational era looks like, it will focus on the development of a core set of skills: critical thinking, the ability to synthesize information, the ability to innovate, creativity, and collaboration. Museums are uniquely situated to help learners develop these core skills.
- Museums create jobs and support local economies. Museums serve as economic engines, bolster local infrastructure, and spur tourism. Both the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Governors Association agree that cultural assets such as museums are essential to attracting businesses, a skilled workforce, and local and international tourism. Museums pump more than \$20 billion into the American economy, creating many jobs.
- Museums address community challenges. Many museums offer programs tailored to seniors, veterans, children with special needs, persons with disabilities, and more, greatly expanding their reach and impact. For example, some have programs designed specifically for children on the autism spectrum, some are teaching English as a Second Language, and some are serving as locations for supervised family visits through the family court system. In 2011, more than 1,500 museums participated in the Blue Star Museums initiative, offering free admission to all active duty and reserve personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day.
- Digitization and traveling exhibitions bring museum collections to underserved populations. Teachers, students, and researchers benefit when cultural institutions are able to increase access to trustworthy information through online collections and traveling exhibits. Most museums, however, need more help in digitizing collections.

Grants to museums are highly competitive and decided through a rigorous, peer-reviewed process. Even the most ardent deficit hawks view the IMLS grantmaking process – the “regular process” – as a model for the nation. It would take approximately \$124.6 million to fund all the grant applications that IMLS received from museums in 2011. But given the significant budget cuts, many highly-rated grant applications go unfunded each year:

- Only 32% Museums for America/Conservation Project projects were funded;

- Only 15% National Leadership/21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum Professionals projects were funded;
- Only 64% Native American/Hawaiian Museum Services projects were funded; and
- Only 37% African American History and Culture projects were funded.

It should be noted that each time a museum grant is awarded, additional local and private funds are also leveraged. In addition to the required dollar-for-dollar match required of museums, grants often spur additional giving by private foundations and individual donors. A recent IMLS study found that 67% of museums that received Museums for America grants reported that their IMLS grant had positioned the museum to receive additional private funding.

Here are just a few examples of how Office of Museum Services funding is used:

- The Iowa Children's Museum in Coralville will use its \$117,769 Museums for America grant awarded in 2011 to establish "MoneyWorks!"—a financial literacy project targeting children aged 4 to 10. The proposed project will empower children by adding active financial literacy experiences to the museum's current CityWorks exhibit. "MoneyWorks!" enables children and their families to take on the roles of bank tellers, pizza chefs, doctors, and more in a pretend city environment where they can explore the concepts of earning, spending, saving, and giving. Through basic math skills, creative problem solving, and increased awareness of financial choices and consequences, kids will acquire a lifetime of essential financial literacy skills.
- The National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, will use its \$148,351 Museums for America grant awarded in 2011 to capture the personal stories and family sagas of Czech and Slovak Cold War émigrés and recent (post-Velvet Revolution) Czech and Slovak immigrants to America. Beginning in Cedar Rapids and then extending to New York, Chicago, the District of Columbia, Florida, and the San Francisco Bay Area, this project will involve a new permanent exhibition, a traveling exhibit, and an oral history recording booth to be designed, constructed, and implemented in the museum.
- The University of Northern Iowa Museums in Cedar Falls will use its \$149,684 Museums for America grant awarded in 2011 to protect and preserve the archive's resources (9,000 original documents relating to early Iowa education), ensuring public access to this valuable historical information. The historically important Marshall Center School, owned by UNI Museums, maintains a collection of over 3,000 photographs, school board records, oral histories, teacher certificates and contracts, teaching materials, maps, diaries, letters, furnishings, and textbooks from the 1850s to the 1960s. With the addition of the statewide collection of official rural school documents, the UNI Museums' Center for the History of Rural Iowa Education and Culture is poised to become a significant national center for the study of educational, rural, and women's history.
- The McWane Science Center in Birmingham, Alabama, will use its \$140,020 Museums for America grant awarded in 2011 to partner with the W. J. Christian public school in Birmingham to provide teacher training workshops, classroom outreach programs, science laboratories and programs, and a school-based science resource center. The

partnership is designed to pair a formal, public school with an informal education institution to provide low-income and disadvantaged students with the opportunity to access quality learning environments, equipment, and laboratories. The project will result in a revised science curriculum and professional development resources for science teachers. The project aims to engage students in science and inspire them to pursue opportunities for advanced science education. The Science Education Partnership will help further the museum's mission of "changing lives through science and wonder" by serving as an extension of the school-based science classroom.

- The Alabama Space Science Exhibit Commission in Huntsville, Alabama, will use its \$150,000 Museums for America grant awarded in 2011 to develop, "Carrying Out the Mission," an exhibit on astronaut training at its museum, the U.S. Space & Rocket Center. The center houses one of the world's largest collections of space artifacts and "Carrying Out the Mission" is one part of a 12-module exhibit plan that will use historical artifacts, hands-on interactive stations, two problem-solving computer simulators, and oral histories to explore human space exploration, and in the process inspire current and future generations to engage in science.
- The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, Alabama, is using its \$129,830 Museum Grants for African American History and Culture awarded in 2010 to better engage its diverse audiences by enhancing the staff capacity to effectively utilize technology. With the recent installation of new interactive exhibits and a fiber optic network, the museum will now develop the skills of its staff to more fully utilize the museum's education programs and services. The museum will hire a computer and information systems assistant to provide technical support for exhibitions and staff functions, and a series of technology training programs will be offered to all staff. The project will promote greater efficiency between the various museum departments through improved communication and coordination, information sharing, data collection and analysis, and external communication with visitors and other stakeholders.

In closing, I would like to share with you for the record a letter to the Subcommittee requesting \$50 million for the IMLS Office of Museum Services signed by 18 of your Senate colleagues. Thank you once again for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 29, 2012

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services and  
Education  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services and  
Education  
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby,

We are writing to thank you for your support for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Office of Museum Services (OMS) and to urge the Subcommittee to support \$50 million for OMS in the FY 2013 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.

Museums are economic engines – spending more than \$20 billion in their communities, employing 400,000 Americans, and spurring local tourism. Museums are also fostering the kind of critical thinking skills and innovation that are necessary to keep our nation competitive in the global economy.

The demand for museum services is greater than ever. At a time when school resources are strained and many families cannot afford to travel or make ends meet, museums are working overtime to fill the gaps – providing more than 18 million instructional hours to schoolchildren, bringing art and cultural heritage, dynamic exhibitions and living specimens into local communities, encouraging national service and volunteerism, collecting food and other resources for needy families and individuals, and offering free or reduced admission to military families. Unfortunately, museums are struggling significantly in these difficult economic times. They are being forced to cut back on hours, educational programming, community services, and jobs. And according to the 2005 Heritage Health Index, at least 190 million artifacts are at risk, suffering from light damage and harmful and insecure storage conditions.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services – the primary federal agency that supports our nation's 17,500 museums – was unanimously reauthorized in 2010 by both the House and Senate. The agency is highly accountable, and its competitive, peer-reviewed grants serve every state. Although the agency has been successful in creating and supporting advancements in areas such as technology, lifelong community learning and conservation and preservation efforts, only a small fraction of the nation's museums are currently being reached, and many highly rated grant applications go unfunded each year. The re-authorization contained several provisions to further support museums, particularly at the state level, but much of the recently authorized activities cannot be accomplished without meaningful funding.

We therefore recommend a critical investment in our nation's museums. Specifically, we are requesting \$50 million for IMLS Office of Museum Services for FY13. Again, we appreciate the Subcommittee's prior support for OMS and request this investment to strengthen and sustain the work of our nation's museums.

Sincerely,



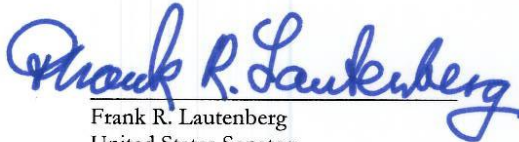
Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United States Senator



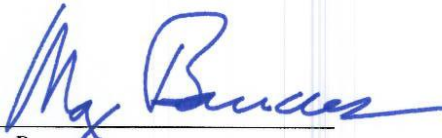
Tim Johnson  
United States Senator



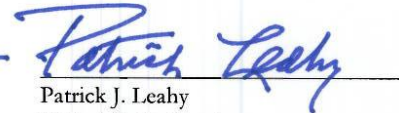
Daniel K. Akaka  
United States Senator



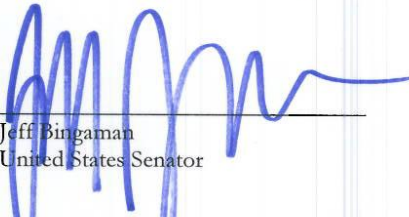
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United States Senator



Max Baucus  
United States Senator



Patrick J. Leahy  
United States Senator



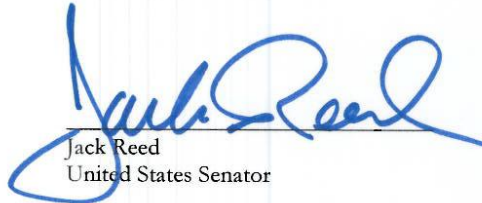
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Barbara A. Mikulski  
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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



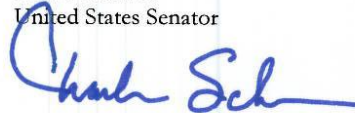
Benjamin L. Cardin  
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Bernie Sanders  
United States Senator



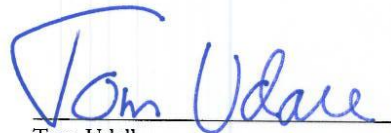
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Tom Udall  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator