



Issues at a Glance

Museums play a key role in education, job creation, tourism, economic development, historic preservation, environmental conservation, and advancing scientific literacy and global competitiveness. Museums also have strong public support: a 2017 national public opinion poll, [Museums and Public Opinion](#), showed that 95% of voters would approve of lawmakers who acted to support museums and 96% want federal funding for museums to be maintained or increased. The museum community—which includes aquariums, art museums, children’s museums, historic sites, history museums, maritime museums, military museums, natural history museums, planetariums, presidential libraries, public gardens, science centers, and zoos—has worked together to develop this federal policy agenda.

Institute of Museum and Library Services Reauthorization

Congress has regularly reauthorized the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) with broad support. Congress overwhelmingly reauthorized IMLS and its Office of Museum Services (OMS) in late 2018 by enacting the Museum and Library Services Act of 2018 (S. 3530 now Public Law No: 115-410). The legislation was passed with widespread bipartisan support by unanimous consent in the Senate and by a vote of 331 to 28 in the House, showing Congress’ renewed bipartisan support for the agency’s programs and a renewed commitment to its funding. It has a funding authorization of \$38.6 million for OMS and contains a number of provisions specifically supported by the museum field: bolstering the agency’s research and data collection, maintaining an emphasis on state and regional collaboration, expanding interagency partnerships, and highlighting the importance of access to high-quality museum services for every American. It also authorizes a 21st Century Museum Professional Program, for the training of museum professionals, especially those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds.

- We applaud Congress for enacting legislation reauthorizing IMLS, the Museum and Library Services Act of 2018, S. 3530 now Public Law No: 115-410, showing its renewed bipartisan support for the agency’s programs and a renewed commitment to its funding.

Institute of Museum and Library Services’ Office of Museum Services Funding

IMLS is the primary federal agency responsible for helping museums connect people to information and ideas. Its Office of Museum Services (OMS) awards grants to museums to support educating students, preserving and digitizing collections, and engaging communities. Grants are awarded in every state, but current funding has allowed the agency to fund only a small fraction of the highly-rated grant applications it receives. Congress has regularly reauthorized IMLS with broad bipartisan support, most recently in 2018 with a funding authorization of \$38.6 million for OMS. OMS has set a strong record of congressional support during the appropriations submission process in each of the last seven years, with 178 Representatives and 41 Senators signing the FY 2020 appropriations letters on its behalf. IMLS received \$242 million in FY 2019 appropriations, of which \$34.7 million went to the Office of Museum Services.

- We support funding of \$42.7 million in FY 2020 for OMS, the amount approved by the U.S. House of Representatives on June 19, 2019 (H.R. 2740).



Tax Policy

Charitable giving is the lifeblood of museums of all sizes and disciplines; it accounts for more than one-third of their operating funds. We support efforts to extend and expand incentives for charitable giving. Limitations on these incentives could have a chilling effect on the ability of museums to attract donations needed to serve their communities and protect their collections. Congress recently imposed taxes on charities, including museums, that provide transportation and parking benefits to employees, diverting limited funding away from serving their communities.

- We urge Congress to cosponsor legislation establishing a universal charitable deduction (H.R. 1260), allowing taxpayers to deduct their charitable contributions, regardless of whether they itemize; cosponsor legislation to repeal the new Unrelated Business Income Tax (UBIT) on expenses that charities incur in providing transportation fringe benefits to employees (H.R. 1223; H.R. 513/S. 1282; S. 632); and cosponsor the Artist-Museum Partnership Act (H.R. 1793), which would allow artists to claim a fair market value deduction when they donate their own work to a collecting institution.

Elementary and Secondary Education

Museums are vital education providers, educating students, providing professional development to teachers, and helping teach local curricula. Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (the “Every Student Succeeds Act”) provides states with significantly more flexibility in setting and meeting performance targets, which could make it easier for schools to work with museums.

- We support efforts to promote school-museum partnerships (including museum schools), require greater collaboration between the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, fully fund federal education programs in which museums participate, and fully implement the “well-rounded education” provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act, which include the many subject areas in which museums help teach the curricula.

Higher Education

Median earnings for adults with a bachelor’s degree are approximately 64 percent higher than those with just a high school diploma, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Yet, student loan balances constitute the largest source of debt for American households. While many museum jobs require bachelor’s or even advanced degrees, nonprofit museum professionals often do not earn as much as they might in the private sector. Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) is a vital tool in allowing talented and highly trained employees from all socioeconomic backgrounds to work at organizations that make an impact in their community. Many museums benefit from Higher Education Act (HEA) programs.

- We support efforts to improve the affordability and accessibility of higher education for all students. We urge Congress to support and improve Public Service Loan Forgiveness and sufficient income-driven repayment options for federal student loans. We also ask that Congress support HEA programs in which museums participate.



National Endowment for the Humanities

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) provides direct grants to museums, universities, archives, and libraries in support of research, education, and preservation. Due to high demand and extremely limited funding, NEH was only able to fund 16 percent of the proposals it received in 2016. It also provides annual grants to state humanities councils in every state and U.S. territory. NEH received \$152.8 million in FY 2018 appropriations and \$155 million in FY 2019 appropriations.

- We urge Congress to provide at least \$167.5 million for NEH in FY 2020, the amount approved by the U.S. House of Representatives on June 25, 2019 (H.R. 3055).

National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) works to bring the arts to every community in America, including rural areas, military bases, and urban centers. It provides grants to all types of arts organizations—including museums—to exhibit, preserve, and interpret visual materials. The agency's federal role is uniquely valuable: no other funder, public or private, funds the arts in every state and the U.S. territories. NEA also distributes roughly forty percent of its grant funds to state arts agencies for re-granting. NEA received \$152.8 million in FY 2018 appropriations and \$155 million in FY 2019 appropriations.

- We urge Congress to provide \$167.5 million for NEA in FY 2020, the amount approved by the U.S. House of Representatives on June 25, 2019 (H.R. 3055).

Science Engagement and STEM Education

Hundreds of millions of Americans of all ages and backgrounds learn about STEM each year by visiting museums, science centers, public gardens, zoos, aquariums, and other cultural institutions. In December 2018, a new five-year Federal STEM Strategic Plan was published by the Federal government that reflects a desire to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in STEM by providing all Americans with lifelong access to high-quality STEM education. Museums already work with a wide range of Federal agencies in advancing the aspirational goals laid out in the plan. Direct support for STEM research and education is primarily provided through the National Science Foundation (NSF), including its Advancing Informal STEM Learning (AISL) program. NSF is responsible for about two-thirds of all Federal funding for biological, geological, and anthropological research at America's universities, science centers and other museums. Many other Federal agencies have significant programs to support STEM education and public engagement with scientific research through informal STEM learning, including the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and National Institutes of Health (NIH). The FY 2018 appropriations legislation provided \$62.5 million for AISL and continued funding for the NASA, NOAA, NIH and other Federal programs in which museums participate. AISL, NASA and NOAA FY 2019 funding await resolution.

- We urge Congress to fully restore funding for the AISL program to \$65 million—the FY 2010 funding level—and to continue to support informal STEM programs at NASA, NOAA, and NIH. We also urge support for other NSF directorates that fund museum research and collections and



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are key to stem learning, including Biological Sciences; Education and Human Resources; Geosciences; and Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences.

Historic Preservation

In addition to preserving and protecting more than 1 billion objects, many museums are historic themselves, and their collections are critical to telling our collective national story. Historic sites and historic preservation efforts not only protect our national heritage, they are also economic engines and job creators in the thousands of communities they serve. Minimal government funding helps to leverage significant private support, often through the Historic Tax Credit. The FY 2019 appropriations provided \$49.7 million to State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), \$11.7 million to Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs), and \$750,000 for grants to underserved communities—all through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF). It also provided an additional \$14.5 million from the HPF to document, interpret, and preserve the stories and sites associated with the Civil Rights Movement. Save America's Treasures (SAT) received \$13 million in FY 2019 through the HPF. Preserve America has not been funded since FY 2010.

- We urge Congress to support FY 2020 funding of at least \$53.7 million for SHPOs, \$13.7 million for THPOs, \$750,000 for grants to underserves communities, \$17.5 million for civil rights sites, \$16 million for Save America's Treasures—the amounts approved by the U.S. House of Representatives on June 25, 2019 (H.R. 3055), and \$4.6 million for Preserve America, and to continue supporting the Historic Tax Credit.

Public Diplomacy and the Protection of Cultural Property

As welcoming and trusted community anchors, museums are perfectly positioned to help build cross-cultural relationships, which are enhanced by collections that span the world across centuries. In recent years, irreplaceable cultural property has been lost in places like Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Mali, and Afghanistan. Protecting this property—both directly and by working through international organizations—is a vital part of United States diplomacy, showing the respect of the United States for other cultures and the common heritage of humanity. American museums and the conservation professionals who work with them are some of the world's best at protecting and caring for cultural property.

- We urge Congress to pursue measures that protect cultural property around the world, and to consider museums and conservation professionals as part of the solution to these issues.

Shutdown Prevention and Economic Impact

Government shutdowns occur with some frequency; there have been 20 of them since 1976. During the 16-day shutdown in October 2013, hundreds of museums nationwide—as well as national parks, forests, monuments, and historic sites—were forced to close their doors. This prevented the public from enjoying artworks, historic treasures, and lands that are intended to be held in the public trust. The economic impact of these closures was devastating, not just for the entities themselves, but for many businesses that rely on the tourism they generate. The damage from the 35-day 2018-2019 partial government shutdown—the longest in U.S. history—is still being assessed.



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- We urge Congress to amend the Anti-Deficiency Act to allow for the continuity of operations and public access to our nation's public lands and federally operated museums in the event of a funding gap.

The Multinational Species Conservation Funds and Wildlife Conservation

In addition to educating the public about wildlife, accredited zoos and aquariums also protect endangered species in their collections and across their natural habitat. The Multinational Species Conservation Funds (MSCF) are targeted investments in global priority species, such as African and Asian elephants, tigers, rhinoceros, great apes, and sea turtles. The MSCF program has helped to sustain wildlife populations by controlling poaching, reducing human-wildlife conflict, and protecting essential habitats globally. Despite its modest funding level, this program has a significant impact because it consistently leverages three or four times its federal investment in matching funds from corporations, conservation groups, and national governments.

- We urge Congress to support funding for the Multinational Species Conservation Funds and to pass legislation that would reauthorize the MSCF programs through FY 2024.
- The museum community, including botanical gardens, strongly supports efforts to protect native wildlife, including declining pollinator populations.