

Issues at a Glance

Museums—the vast majority of which are 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations—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’ 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. 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 \$252 million in FY 2020 appropriations, of which \$38.5 million went to OMS.

- We urge Congress to provide \$42.7 million in FY 2021 for OMS, the amount approved by the U.S. House of Representatives last year.

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. We urge Congress to:

- cosponsor legislation establishing a universal charitable deduction (H.R. 651, H.R. 1260, H.R. 5293), allowing taxpayers to deduct their charitable contributions, regardless of whether they itemize;
- 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; and
- cosponsor the Legacy IRA Act (H.R. 3832, S. 1257), which would expand the IRA Charitable Rollover.



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 is only able to fund a small percentage of the proposals it receives. The agency also provides annual grants to state humanities councils in every state and U.S. territory. NEH received \$155 million in FY 2019 appropriations and \$162.25 million in FY 2020 appropriations.

- We urge Congress to provide at least \$170 million for NEH in FY 2021.

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. The NEA also distributes roughly forty percent of its grant funds to state arts agencies for re-granting. The NEA received \$155 million in FY 2019 appropriations and \$162.25 million in FY 2020 appropriations.

- We urge Congress to provide \$170 million for the NEA in FY 2021.

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) program funding.

- We support efforts to improve the affordability and accessibility of higher education for all students. We urge Congress to support and improve PSLF and sufficient income-driven repayment options for federal student loans. We also ask that Congress support funding for HEA programs in which museums participate, such as Title VI International and Foreign Language Education.



Lifelong STEM Engagement

Museums, science centers, zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens, and other cultural institutions have an important role to play in increasing the understanding of and engagement with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) among people of all ages. As museums are key partners in ensuring Americans' lifelong engagement in STEM, we urge Congress to:

- support federal agency efforts to implement the 5-year Federal STEM Education Strategic Plan;
- fully fund and authorize museums to participate in STEM engagement and informal STEM education programs across federal science agencies;
- fund the following programs at their inflation-adjusted FY 2020 levels: NSF's Advancing Informal STEM Learning (AISL) program at \$64.5 million, NOAA's Office of Education at \$30.5 million, NASA's Office of STEM Engagement at \$123 million and Science Mission Directorate's Science Engagement and Partnerships Division at \$47 million, and NIH's Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA) program at \$21 million; and
- regard museums as vital components of the STEM education ecosystem, including by ensuring that such organizations are eligible for relevant federal funding opportunities and represented at appropriate conversations convened by federal agencies.

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 2020 appropriations provided \$52.7 million to State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), \$13.7 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 \$18.8 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 \$16 million in FY 2020 through the HPF and the Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grant program received \$7.5 million.

- We urge Congress to support FY 2021 funding of at least \$61 million for SHPOs, \$22 million for THPOs, \$850,000 for grants to underserved communities, \$28 million for civil rights sites, \$18 million for Save America's Treasures, \$10 million for Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grants and to cosponsor the Historic Tax Credit Growth and Opportunity Act (H.R. 2825/S. 2615). We also urge Congress to support the legislative proposals recommended by the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission in its [report to the President](#) on the country's 250th commemoration.

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. We expect the United States Government to comply with international law and urge the U.S. Government to maintain its commitment to its longstanding practice of not targeting cultural sites during peace or wartime.

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 but the Smithsonian lost an estimated \$3.4 million in revenue and the National parks lost more than \$10 million in revenue.

- 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 species in their collections and across their natural habitats. The Multinational Species Conservation Funds (MSCF) are targeted investments in global priority species such as African and Asian elephants, tigers, rhinos, great apes, tortoises, freshwater turtles, and marine turtles. The MSCF program helps to sustain wildlife populations by combating 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 almost a 2 to 1 match of federal dollars from partner governments, local NGOs, international conservation organizations, and private businesses.

- We urge Congress to pass H.R. 1446/S. 652, legislation to reauthorize the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp which benefits these critical programs.
- The museum community, including botanical gardens, strongly supports efforts to protect native wildlife, including declining pollinator populations.