

Advocating for Museums During COVID-19

As federal, state, and local elected officials consider future economic relief and annual funding legislation, there's never been a more critical time to advocate for museums and your role in the field. In 2020, advocates have sent more than forty-five thousand messages to Congress using the Alliance's [online advocacy tools](#)—messages that are critical to garnering federal support for museums, including federal CARES Act funding and letters of support for museum funding led by members of Congress. But we know the field-wide need is great and further support for museums is needed, so we must keep making the case directly to our legislators.

What can I do today?

Through the [Advocacy section](#) of the Alliance's website, you can access a multitude of ways to advocate for museums, now and throughout the year. You can:

- [Urge your legislators to provide support for museums](#)
- [Find your legislators & their social media information](#)
- [Learn more about financial relief and resources](#)
- [Download your state's economic impact](#)
- [See the latest Alliance Advocacy Alerts](#)
- [Engage your board in advocacy](#)
- [Write a letter to the editor](#)

You can also find the [Alliance's COVID-19 resources](#) and [posts](#), download [TrendsWatch 2020: Building Resilience in a Time of Crisis](#), and check out our new Advocacy toolkit: [Speaking Up: Museum Advocacy in Action](#). You can also access AAM's updated step-by-step How-To Guide, [Invite Congress to Visit your Museum](#) (in-person or virtually).

How do I stay informed?

[Alliance Advocacy Alerts](#) provide timely and relevant updates on field-wide legislative asks, current congressional activity, and critical moments in the process for museum advocates to make the case for museums with legislators. Alerts often include legislative analysis and key talking points for the museum field. If you do not already receive them, [email us](#) today to receive future Alliance Advocacy Alerts. Follow your state and regional museum associations for information and opportunities in your state and region. Also keep informed by following:

- The [Alliance's website](#)
- The [Alliance blog](#) and [Center for the Future of Museums blog](#)
- [Field Notes](#)
- Aviso (member newsletter), and

- the Alliance’s social media on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#)

What are the priority issues to cover?

It’s important to be aware of what is top-of-mind for the audience you are trying to reach and to frame your issues and requests accordingly. Following your legislators’ [websites, press releases, and social media](#) activity will give you an idea of their current priorities and activities, and how your concerns and issues may fit in to what else is on their radar.

Legislators have been focused primarily on pandemic-related issues ranging from short and long-term economic relief to re-opening, but focus on Capitol Hill is also shifting to include the regular appropriations process and additional legislation. You may want to highlight how your museum is educating local students, serving veterans or other groups in your community, or providing support to local first responders. Always be clear about why you are reaching out, what information you want to share, and any specific requests you have for the office.

How should I approach legislators?

Just like you, legislators and their staff are busy people managing multiple priorities, but connecting with constituents (you!) is a high priority. Legislators and staff rely on constituents—**that’s you!**—to let them know your needs and how current policy decisions will affect you and your work.

You can [find your legislators](#) and information about their office locations, key staff roles, and social media pages in [AAM’s Legislator Directory](#). Always be professional and treat the staff with respect and compassion, especially in times of crisis when offices are also adjusting to new norms and work routines. Ask staff how they are doing and confirm with them what the best way is to communicate and share information at this time.

There are key steps you can take to help your message resonate with legislators and staff.

- **Do your homework.** While you are not expected to be a legislative or policy expert, it’s good to understand where things are in the process, and to learn about your legislators. Keep up with [Alliance Advocacy Alerts](#) so you know the status of issues affecting museums and use our [Getting to Know Your Legislators](#) guide to learn more about your elected officials’ interests, committees, and current priorities through their websites, their social media, and online news coverage.
- **Story + data is a winning combination.** Data gets legislators’ and staff members’ attention, while a personal story about the data and your work helps make an impression and turn them into advocates for your cause. It’s important to help legislators and their staff understand the [economic impact of museums](#), how your museum is directly affected by the pandemic, and also all of the ways your museum continues to serve the community during this time. Use [AAM template messages](#) to get started.
- **Engage your trustees in advocacy for your museum.** Your board members and trustees are an important piece of your advocacy. They are representatives of the museum and

may already have strong relationships with the legislators and stakeholders you are trying to reach. See our [trustee resources](#), including [Stand for your Mission: The Power of Board Advocacy](#), to make advocacy part of your regular conversation with your board.

- **The public supports legislators who support museums.** AAM's national public opinion polling, [Museums & Public Opinion](#), shows that Americans overwhelmingly appreciate and recognize the work of museums as educational and economic assets to their communities. What's more, Americans broadly support federal funding of museums and approve of lawmakers who take action to support museums.

What tools & resources does AAM provide?

Advocacy is as an essential leadership skill, whether you're currently in a leadership position at your museum, looking to gain valuable skills to benefit your institution, or working to advance your own career. AAM provides the tools and resources to empower you to be an effective advocate for museums, whatever your current role in the museum field.

AAM's full suite of [advocacy resources](#) provides many more tools and resources to help you build your own advocacy skills and advocate effectively, from tips for [Advocating from Anywhere](#) and [Communicating with Legislators](#), to creating a [Year-Round Advocacy Plan](#), the [Museum Facts Infographic](#), [Online Advocacy Programs](#) and [Advocacy as Disaster Planning](#). Also make sure you are connected with your **local CVB/Chamber of Commerce**—these organizations are dedicated to promoting the value of your community and are likely including the cultural, scientific, and educational community in their messaging and efforts. Make sure you are at the table and part of that critical conversation.

You make the difference!

AAM can't do it alone. In relationship-building and advocating for museums, your constituency is your super-power. It's up to each of us to use our voice to speak up for museums. Legislators and decision-makers do not know the unique and essential roles museums play in our communities unless we share our stories with them. AAM works with legislators and their staffs on Capitol Hill directly throughout the year, but nothing has a greater influence on legislators than hearing directly from constituents like you. You are the best advocate for museums and your voice matters!

Visit www.aam-us.org/advocacy to learn more.

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Support Field-Wide Advocacy for Museum Relief:

The current crisis is taking a distressing financial toll on cultural organizations, and AAM is no different. In these challenging times, we ask that if you can, consider supporting our advocacy work and making extensive COVID-19 resources freely available for our field, by [making a donation](#) or [becoming a member](#) of AAM. Thank you for your much-needed support.