

# Legislative Agenda: 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 are essential community infrastructure and 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, railway museums, science centers, and zoos—has worked together to develop this federal policy agenda.

## Background: Museums and the COVID-19 Pandemic

The pandemic has inflicted profound damage on US museums, the vast majority of which are 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organizations. The museum field will take years to recover to pre-pandemic levels of staffing, revenue, and attendance. Far fewer museums than initially expected are in danger of permanent closure and tens of thousands of jobs were saved thanks to several federal relief programs. However, according to a 2022 [survey](#), attendance was down nearly 40 percent for many of our nation’s museums. Despite the tremendous financial and psychological stress caused by the pandemic, museum professionals demonstrated the critical role museums play in our country’s infrastructure and deepened their social impact in their communities.

## 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. During the COVID-19 pandemic, OMS has provided critical leadership to the museum community through its CARES Act and American Rescue Plan grants, and the agency has been providing science-based information and recommended practices to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to staff and visitors engaging in the delivery of museum services. Its Communities for Immunity partnership is working to boost COVID-19 vaccine confidence in communities across the country. 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 several years, with 136 Representatives and 42 Senators signing the FY 2023 appropriations letters on its behalf. In FY 2022, Congress provided \$268 million to IMLS, of which \$47.6 million was directed to the Office of Museum Services. With this funding, OMS provided 280 grants totaling \$44.6 million to museums and related organizations in 49 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

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## **We urge Congress to:**

- provide at least \$65.5 million in fiscal year (FY) 2024 for the IMLS Office of Museum Services, a much needed increase of at least \$10 million accounting for inflation and public need for museum services.
- include funding for the agency to explore establishing a roadmap to strengthen the structural support for a museum Grants to States program administered by OMS, as authorized by the Museum and Library Services Act, 20 U.S.C. Section 9173(a)(4), in addition to the agency's current direct grants to museums.

## **Tax Policy**

Contributions to 501(c)(3) charities such as museums are tax-deductible, incentivizing those who itemize deductions to give more. Charitable giving accounts for more than one-third of museums' operating funds. Only about ten percent of taxpayers now itemize deductions, however, and both the amount given and the number of donors were declining prior to the pandemic. Smaller gifts increased during the pandemic due to the enactment of the temporary deduction for nonitemizers. **We ask members of the House and Senate to:**

- Be on the lookout for introduction of charitable giving legislation, which would renew and expand the charitable tax deduction for taxpayers who do not itemize deductions. The deduction allowed taxpayers to deduct up to \$300 (\$600 for couples) for charitable gifts during the pandemic, but it expired at the end of 2021, leading to a marked drop in small donations.
- Cosponsor it when it is introduced.

## **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 US territory. NEH received \$207 million in FY 2023 appropriations.

- **We urge Congress to** provide the NEH with a robust funding increase for FY 2024.

## **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 US territories. The NEA also distributes roughly forty percent of its grant funds to state arts agencies for re-granting. NEA received \$207 million in FY 2023 appropriations.

- **We urge Congress to** provide the NEA with a robust funding increase for FY 2024.

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## Elementary and Secondary Education

Museums are vital education providers, educating students, providing professional development to teachers, and helping teach local curricula, especially critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. Museum education programs help bridge the [digital divide](#). [Museums represent one of the only educational systems outside of our formal framework with the knowledge and people power to back up our teachers and parents on the front lines](#). Strong civic education is essential to the future of our constitutional democracy. AAM is an active member of the [CivXNow Coalition](#) and supports legislative efforts to invest in K-12 civic education. 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 urge members of Congress to support and cosponsor the Civics Secures Democracy Act, expected to be reintroduced in the House and Senate, which would invest in K-12 civic education and American history.
- 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 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 legislation that ensures Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) is accessible and achievable and support reforms that waive the full-time employment criteria during the pandemic, overhaul the disqualification rules to reflect the original intent of Congress, clarify the kinds of payments and services that count toward forgiveness, as well as expand the types of loans that may be forgiven. We support efforts to improve the affordability and accessibility of higher education for all students. We also ask that Congress support funding for HEA programs in which museums participate, such as Title VI International and Foreign Language Education.

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## 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:

- fully fund and authorize museums to participate in STEM engagement and informal STEM education programs across federal science agencies;
- include opportunities for public engagement as part of agency research programs with significant public interest and ensure that museums are eligible to compete for related awards;
- fund the following programs at levels that meet or exceed inflation-adjusted levels from recent years: NSF's Advancing Informal STEM Learning (AISL) program at \$75 million, NOAA's Office of Education at \$38 million, NASA's Office of STEM Engagement at \$150 million and Science Mission Directorate's Science Engagement and Partnerships Division at \$48 million, and NIH's Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA) program at \$25 million;
- ensure that museums have the opportunity to compete for funds related to facilities improvement to address areas including public health, sustainability, and energy efficiency, including opportunities available to schools and other educational institutions; 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, but 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. In FY 2023 an omnibus spending bill outlined appropriations for the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) with a record-setting overall funding level of over \$204 million. \$62.15 million of which was allocated to State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and \$23 million to Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs). Competitive grant programs received funding as follows: Save America's Treasures (SAT): \$26.5 million, African American Civil Rights: \$24 million, Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grant program: \$12.5 million, Historically Black Colleges/Universities: \$11 million, Semiquincentennial celebration grants: \$10 million, History of Equal Rights grants: \$5 million, Underrepresented Community grants: \$1.25 million. **We urge Congress to:**

- support the permanent reauthorization of Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), and increase the authorization to at least \$300 million annually; support FY 2024 funding of at least \$70 million for State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and at least \$34 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs); provide at least the following amounts for competitive grant programs under the HPF: \$40 million for Save America's Treasures, \$28 million for African American Civil Rights, \$17 million for Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grants for the

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rehabilitation of historic properties and economic development of rural communities, \$13 million for Historically Black Colleges/Universities, \$11 million for U.S. Semiquincentennial celebration grants for our nation's 250<sup>th</sup> commemoration, \$7 million for Equal Rights grants, \$5 million for Underrepresented Community grants; and support the Historic Tax Credit by cosponsoring the Historic Tax Credit Growth and Opportunity Act upon the bills reintroduction.

### Climate Action and Museums

Museums can help advance carbon neutrality and respond to the impacts of climate change. Museums are considered one of the [most trustworthy sources of information](#) in America, and as such are excellent entry points for climate conversations, both community-oriented and internal. As educational institutions, museums are valuable engines for understanding environment and climate issues. They have a distinct ability to engage the public and the media with data, images, and context for knowledge-building. Museums are research hubs and have contributed to climate change research across a variety of areas. Museums are valuable pilot sites for experimental technologies through operations and exhibits. Museums are essential community infrastructure and local partners for achieving environmental sustainability goals. They are connected to their fellow nonprofits, educational systems, and local businesses, and can model green practices to inspire and collaborate with their communities to help reach desired outcomes. **We urge Congress to:**

- Increase funding for the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's Sec. 40541 [Energy Efficiency Materials Pilot Program for Nonprofits](#) — a \$50 million pilot program to award grants for energy-efficiency materials upgrades to buildings owned and operated by 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, including museums.
- Increase funding for other museum eligible grant programs, such as the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Climate Smart Program and to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) specifically to support climate change work in museums, including facility adaptations and resiliency work, as well as exhibits and programs.
- Include museums as named community partners and as eligible nonprofit organizations in legislation for energy and climate funding opportunities and education initiatives.

### 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.

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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 US history—was enormous and cost the government a total of \$11 billion. 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.

- The museum community, including botanical gardens, strongly supports efforts to protect native wildlife, including declining pollinator populations.

# Museums and the COVID-19 Pandemic

## Background

The pandemic has inflicted profound damage on US museums, the vast majority of which are 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organizations. The museum field will take years to recover to pre-pandemic levels of staffing, revenue, and attendance. Far fewer museums than initially expected are in danger of permanent closure and tens of thousands of jobs were saved thanks to several federal relief programs. However, according to a 2022 [survey](#), attendance was down nearly 40 percent for many of our nation's museums. Despite the tremendous financial and psychological stress caused by the pandemic, museum professionals demonstrated the critical role museums play in our country's infrastructure and deepened their social impact in their communities.

## Talking Points

- The museum field is facing a slow recovery that will take years to come back from due to the dire financial impacts of the pandemic.
- During the pandemic, one-third of museums were at risk of permanent closure without federal support. Because of the influx of financial assistance from federal, state, and local governments, this number reduced significantly. But negative impacts of the pandemic remain.
- Museums are struggling with the same unprecedented staff shortages that have impacted many industries.
- As essential community infrastructure, museums proved crucial to their communities' resiliency during the pandemic—from supporting vaccination to hosting food distribution.
- During the continued COVID-19 pandemic, museums across the country continued contributing to the ongoing education of our country's children by providing lesson plans, online learning opportunities, and drop-off learning kits to teachers and families. They used their outdoor spaces to grow and donate produce to area food banks, as well as maintained these spaces for individuals to safely relax, enjoy nature, and recover from the mental health impacts of social isolation. They provided access to childcare and meals to families of health care workers and first responders, have donated their PPE and scientific equipment to fight COVID-19, and are serving as vaccination centers.
- Early in the pandemic, essentially all museums were closed to the public. 33 percent of directors felt their museums were at some risk of permanent closure without immediate support—a threatened loss of 12,000 museums and 124,000 jobs.
- While PPP and SVOG have provided critical lifelines, a 2022 [survey](#) shows attendance remains down 38 percent on average from pre-pandemic levels.
- 60 percent of museums reported experiencing pandemic-related financial losses since March 2020, with the average being a little over \$791,000. 60 percent of responding museums have budgets of \$1 million or less.



# IMLS Office of Museum Services Funding

## Request

We urge Congress to:

- provide at least \$65.5 million in fiscal year (FY) 2024 for the IMLS Office of Museum Services, a much needed increase of at least \$10 million accounting for inflation and public need for museum services.
- include funding for the agency to explore establishing a roadmap to strengthen the structural support for a museum Grants to States program administered by OMS, as authorized by the Museum and Library Services Act, 20 U.S.C. Section 9173(a)(4), in addition to the agency's current direct grants to museums.

## Introduction

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is the primary federal agency responsible for helping museums connect people to information and ideas. Its Office of Museum Services (OMS) supports all types of museums—including aquariums, arboretums, art museums, botanical gardens, children's museums, culturally-specific museums, historic sites, history museums, military museums, natural history museums, nature centers, planetariums, railway museums, science and technology centers, zoos, and more—by awarding grants that help them educate students, preserve and digitize collections, and connect with their communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, OMS has provided critical leadership to the museum community through its CARES Act, American Rescue Plan grants, and the agency has been providing science-based information and recommended practices to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to staff and visitors engaging in the delivery of museum services. Its Communities for Immunity partnership helped boost COVID-19 vaccine confidence in communities across the country. The 2022-2026 IMLS strategic plan commits the agency to champion lifelong learning, strengthen community engagement, advance collections stewardship and access, and demonstrate excellence in public service.

## Status

- The Office of Museum Services within IMLS is funded through the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill. It is currently funded at 55.5 million (FY 2023).
- IMLS awarded \$13.8 million through the IMLS CARES Act Grants to Museums and Libraries to 68 museums and libraries to support their response to the coronavirus pandemic. IMLS received 1085 applications from museums but was only able to fund 39 awards or 4 percent for a total of \$8.28 million.
- Out of \$200 million in American Rescue Plan funds, museums received a small fraction, \$10.5 million (5.2%), to provide direct support to address community needs created or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and in assisting with recovery as nearly all of the funding was directed by Congress to the states for broadband expansion.



# IMLS Office of Museum Services Funding

## Talking Points

- The Institute of Museum and Library Services has strong bipartisan support, and has been lauded for its peer-reviewed, highly competitive grant programs.
- OMS has set a strong record of congressional support during the appropriations submission process in each of the last several years, with 136 Representatives and 42 Senators signing FY 2023 appropriations letters on its behalf.
- In FY 2022, Congress provided \$268 million to IMLS, of which \$47.6 million was directed to the Office of Museum Services. With this funding, OMS provided 280 grants totaling \$44.6 million to museums and related organizations in 49 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.
- By leveraging significant private, state, and local funding, OMS grants amplify a small federal investment for maximum impact in the community.
- There is high demand for funding from the IMLS Office of Museum Services. In FY 2022 OMS received 716 applications requesting more than \$109 million, but current funding has allowed the agency to fund only a small fraction of the highly rated grant applications it receives.
- \$65.5 million or more in FY 2024 funding would allow OMS to increase its grant capacity for museums, funds which museums will need to help recover from the pandemic and continue to serve their communities. This substantial funding increase would still be greatly shy of the high demand of \$109 million in FY 2022 in highly rated grant applications the agency received.
- A Grants to States program administered by OMS, in addition to the agency’s current direct grants to museums, would merge federal priorities with state-defined needs and expand the reach of museums and increase their ability to serve their communities, address underserved populations and meet the needs of the current and future museum workforce.
- The Inspire! Grants for Small Museums program, designed to encourage small institutions to apply for IMLS funding, generated 218 applications in FY 2022. IMLS made awards to 59 museums through this program, demonstrating a continuing need for support for the nation’s small museums.

## IMLS Office of Museum Services Funding History

Appropriation  
(in millions)

FY 12	\$30.9
FY 13 CR*	\$30.9
FY 14	\$30.1
FY 15	\$31.3
FY 16	\$31.3
FY 17	\$31.7
FY 18	\$34.7
FY 19	\$34.7
FY 20	\$34.7
FY 21	\$40.5
FY 22	\$47.5
FY 23	\$55.5
FY 24 President’s Request	TBD

*\*In FY 2013, across the board sequestration cuts reduced OMS’ effective funding to \$29.2 million.*

# IMLS Office of Museum Services Funding

- In 2014, IMLS launched Museums for All, a national access initiative. Today, more than 1000 participating museums in 50 states, DC, and the US Virgin Islands offer deeply discounted admission to visitors who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The program has reached over 5.8 million visitors.
- OMS provides critical funding for professional development to improve the recruitment, preparation, and professional development of museum professionals, especially those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds.
- In 2018, legislation reauthorizing IMLS passed Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support by unanimous consent in the Senate and by a vote of 331 to 28 in the House, showing Congress' renewed support for the agency's programs and a renewed commitment to its funding.
- To learn more about grants awarded to museums in your state or district, visit: [Advanced Search | Institute of Museum and Library Services](#).

## Additional Information About Museums

- [Museums are economic engines](#), prior to the pandemic, supporting more than 726,000 jobs and contributing \$50 billion to the US economy per year. They attract tourists, promote economic development, and make communities more desirable for employers.
- Museums' economic impact generates \$12 billion in tax revenue at all levels of government.
- Museums have strong public support: [Museums and Public Opinion](#), a 2017 national public opinion poll, 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.
- Museums are an important part of the nation's educational system, spending more than \$2 billion a year on education and promoting lifelong learning. Museums receive more than 55 million visits each year from student groups.
- Children who visited a museum during kindergarten had higher achievement scores in reading, mathematics, and science in third grade than children who did not.
- Museums are essential community infrastructure, attracting over a million volunteer hours every week, prior to the pandemic.
- Many museums have developed innovative programs to meet the growing needs of their individual communities. For example, some museums have programs designed specifically for children with special needs and their families, some work with medical schools to teach observation and description skills, and some are helping veterans heal from their wounds, both physical and psychological.

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## **FY 2024 House of Representatives OMS Sign-on Letter**

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro,

We write to thank the Subcommittee for its previous support, and to urge you to support robust funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services' (IMLS) Office of Museum Services (OMS) in the FY 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.

U.S. museums, the vast majority of which are 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organizations, still are experiencing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on staff and resources. Survey data shows museum field will take years to recover to pre-pandemic levels of staffing, revenue, and attendance. Despite the tremendous financial and psychological stress caused by the pandemic, museum professionals helped fill the gaps to meet local needs. They continue to demonstrate the critical role museums play in our country's infrastructure and deepening their social impact in their communities.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, OMS has provided critical leadership to the museum community through relief grants and providing science-based information and recommended practices to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to staff and visitors engaging in the delivery of museum services. Its Communities for Immunity partnership is working to boost COVID-19 vaccine confidence in communities across the country.

Despite its small size, the IMLS Office of Museum Services is the largest dedicated source of investment in our nation's museums, which pre-COVID-19 supported over 700,000 jobs and contributed \$50 billion annually to the U.S. economy. OMS funding plays a significant role in this economic impact by helping museums reach more visitors and spur community development. In addition to their economic benefits, OMS grants also support museums' advancements in areas such as public health upgrades, technology, lifelong community learning, and conservation and preservation. These successes notwithstanding, only a small fraction of the nation's museums are currently being reached and many highly rated grant applications go unfunded.

Museums are vital to the nation's recovery and the recovery of communities, big and small, urban and rural, all across the country. At a time when school and community resources are strained, museums are working overtime to fill the gaps. Pre-COVID-19, they welcomed annually more than 55 million schoolchildren, bringing art, science, and cultural heritage into communities, and partnered with other nonprofits to meet the specific needs of their local population. In addition, our nation's museums opened their doors to more people than ever with over 850 million visits each year—with many of these visitors offered free or reduced admission. Museums are essential community infrastructure and part of a robust nonprofit community working to address a wide range of our nation's greatest challenges, from conducting medical research and helping veterans heal physically and psychologically, to creating energy efficient public buildings and collecting food for needy families.

Congress reauthorized IMLS in late 2018 by enacting the Museum and Library Services Act of 2018 (Public Law No: 115-410). This 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' bipartisan support for the agency's programs and a commitment to its funding. The agency is highly accountable, and its competitive, peer-reviewed grants leverage significant private resources while supporting museums in every state.

We urge the Subcommittee to support robust funding for the IMLS Office of Museum Services for FY 2024 to support the important work museums do in our districts. This vital funding will aid museums of all types and enable them to bolster economic recovery, serve our schools and communities, and preserve our cultural heritage for future generations. 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,

Paul Tonko  
U.S. Representative

Chellie Pingree  
U.S. Representative

Andy Barr  
U.S. Representative

(For more information or to sign onto this letter with one of its leads, please contact Darian Harbeck with Rep. Tonko at [darian.harbeck@mail.house.gov](mailto:darian.harbeck@mail.house.gov), Matthew Jackson with Rep. Barr at [matthew.jackson@mail.house.gov](mailto:matthew.jackson@mail.house.gov), or Evan Johnston with Rep. Pingree at [evan.johnston@mail.house.gov](mailto:evan.johnston@mail.house.gov) )

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## FY 2024 Senate OMS Sign-on Letter

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin and Ranking Member Capito:

We write to thank the Subcommittee for its previous support, and to urge you to support robust funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services' (IMLS) Office of Museum Services (OMS) in the fiscal year (FY) 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.

The pandemic has inflicted profound damage on US museums, the vast majority of which are 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organizations. Survey data shows museum field will take years to recover to pre-pandemic levels of staffing, revenue, and attendance. Far fewer museums than initially expected are in danger of permanent closure and tens of thousands of jobs were saved thanks to several federal relief programs. However, attendance is down nearly 40 percent for many of our nation's museums. Despite the tremendous financial and psychological stress caused by the pandemic, museum professionals filled the gaps to meet the needs of their communities. They continue to demonstrate the critical role museums play in our country's infrastructure and deepened their social impact in their communities. OMS has provided critical leadership to the museum community through administering relief grants, and providing science-based information and recommended practices to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to staff and visitors engaging in the delivery of museum services. Its Communities for Immunity partnership helped boost COVID-19 vaccine confidence in communities across the country.

Despite its small size, the IMLS Office of Museum Services is the largest dedicated source of investment in our nation's museums, which typically support more than 700,000 jobs and contribute \$50 billion annually to the U.S. economy. OMS funding plays a significant role in this economic impact by helping museums reach more visitors and spur community development. In addition to their economic benefits, OMS grants support museums' advancements in areas such as public health upgrades, technology, lifelong community learning, and conservation and preservation. These successes notwithstanding, only a small fraction of the nation's museums are currently being reached and many highly rated grant applications go unfunded.

Museums are essential community infrastructure and are vital to the recovery of communities, big and small, urban and rural, all across the country. Pre-pandemic, museums welcome annually more than 55 million schoolchildren, bring art, science and cultural heritage into communities, and partner with other nonprofits to meet the specific needs of their local population. Museums opened their doors to more people than ever with over 850 million visits each year – with many of these visitors offered free or reduced admission. Museums are also working to address a wide range of our nation's greatest challenges. For example, some museums are conducting medical research and creating energy efficient public buildings, while others are helping veterans heal physically and psychologically and collecting food for needy families.

Congress reauthorized IMLS in late 2018 by enacting the Museum and Library Services Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-410). This legislation passed by unanimous consent in the Senate and by a wide margin of 331 to 28 in the House, showing Congress' renewed bipartisan support for the agency's programs and its commitment to providing funding. The agency is highly accountable, and its competitive, peer-reviewed grants leverage significant private resources while supporting museums in every state.

We urge the Subcommittee to support robust funding for the IMLS Office of Museum Services for FY 2024 to support the important work museums do in our states. This vital funding will aid museums of all types and enable them to bolster economic recovery and continue to serve our schools and communities, and preserve our cultural heritage for future generations.

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 Gillibrand  
United States Senator

Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator

**(For more information or to sign onto this letter, please contact Ryan Kambich with Senator Gillibrand at [ryan\\_kambich@gillibrand.senate.gov](mailto:ryan_kambich@gillibrand.senate.gov) or Trevor Hustus with Senator Collins at [trevor\\_hustus@collins.senate.gov](mailto:trevor_hustus@collins.senate.gov).)**

# Tax Policy

## Request

### We urge members of the House and Senate to:

- Be on the lookout for introduction of charitable giving legislation, which would renew and expand the charitable tax deduction for taxpayers who do not itemize deductions. The deduction allowed taxpayers to deduct up to \$300 (\$600 for couples) for charitable gifts during the pandemic, but it expired at the end of 2021, leading to a marked drop in small donations.
- Cosponsor it when it is introduced.

## Introduction

Contributions to 501(c)(3) charities such as museums are tax-deductible, incentivizing those who itemize deductions to give more. Only about ten percent of taxpayers now itemize deductions, however, and both the amount given and the number of donors were declining prior to the pandemic. Smaller gifts increased during the pandemic due to the enactment of the temporary deduction.

## Deductibility of Charitable Gifts

- Charitable giving accounts for more than one-third of museums' operating funds.
- The CARES Act established a limited and temporary deduction for non-itemizers at the start of the pandemic. After having declined in 2019, charitable giving increased following its enactment and dropped after it expired.
- A universal charitable deduction democratizes giving by incentivizing all taxpayers to contribute, regardless of income.

## Status

- Bipartisan bills are expected to be introduced in both the House and the Senate to renew and expand the universal charitable deduction. They are modeled on H.R. 1704 and S. 618 in the last Congress, which temporarily renewed the deduction and expanded it to over \$4,000 for individuals and over \$8,000 for couples.
- **Senators** who wish to cosponsor should contact the offices of James Lankford (R-OK) or Chris Coons (D-DE). **Representatives** should contact the office of Chris Pappas (D-NH). (The Republican chief sponsor in the House in the last Congress was the late Rep. Jackie Walorski of Indiana.)

## Facts and Figures

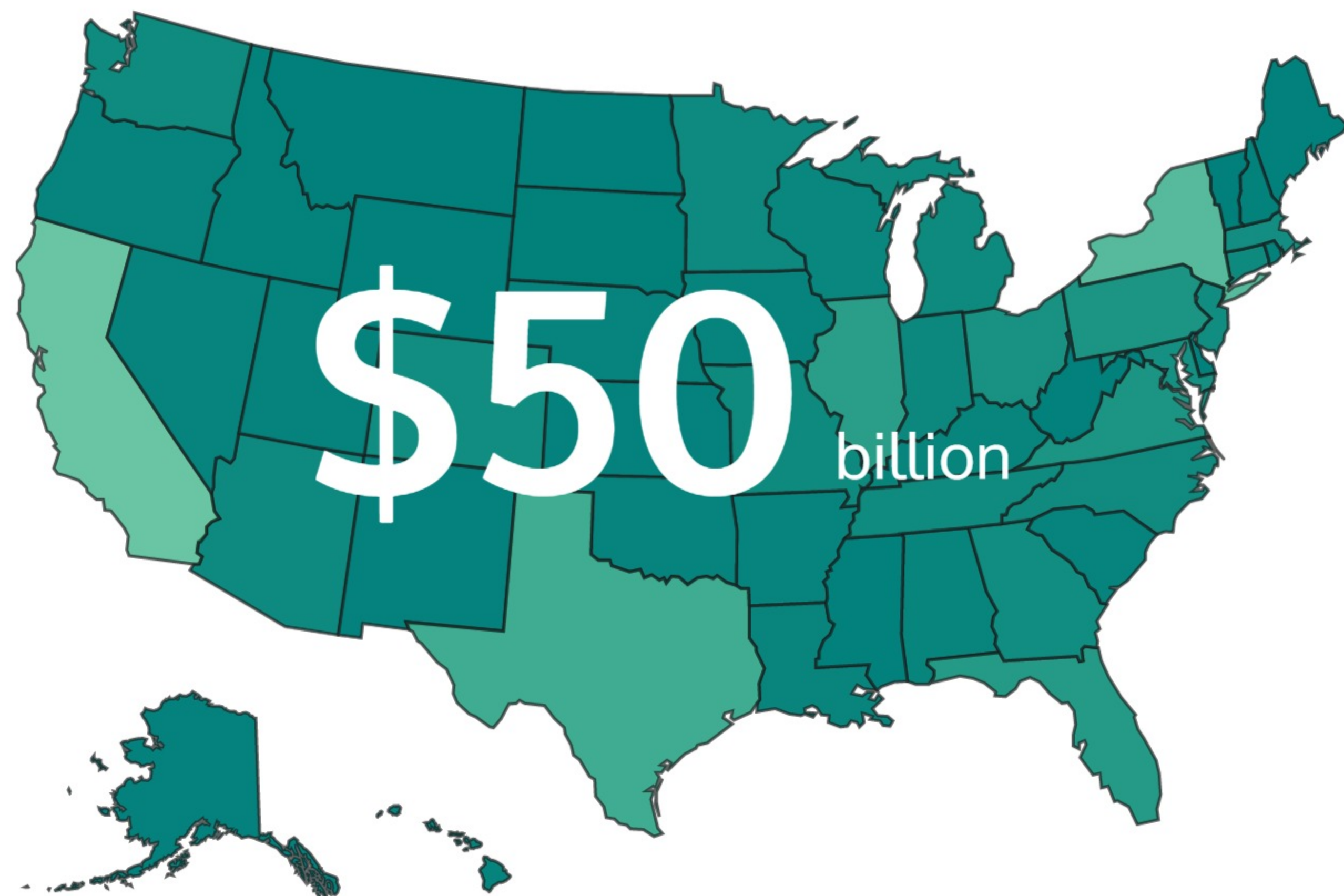
More information on how the giving increased while the “universal charitable deduction” was in effect, and dropped when it expired, is available [here](#).



# Museums as Economic Engines

In 2017, the American Alliance of Museums partnered with Oxford Economics to study the museum sector's significant contribution to the US economy.

Source: Oxford Economics, IMPLAN, 2017.



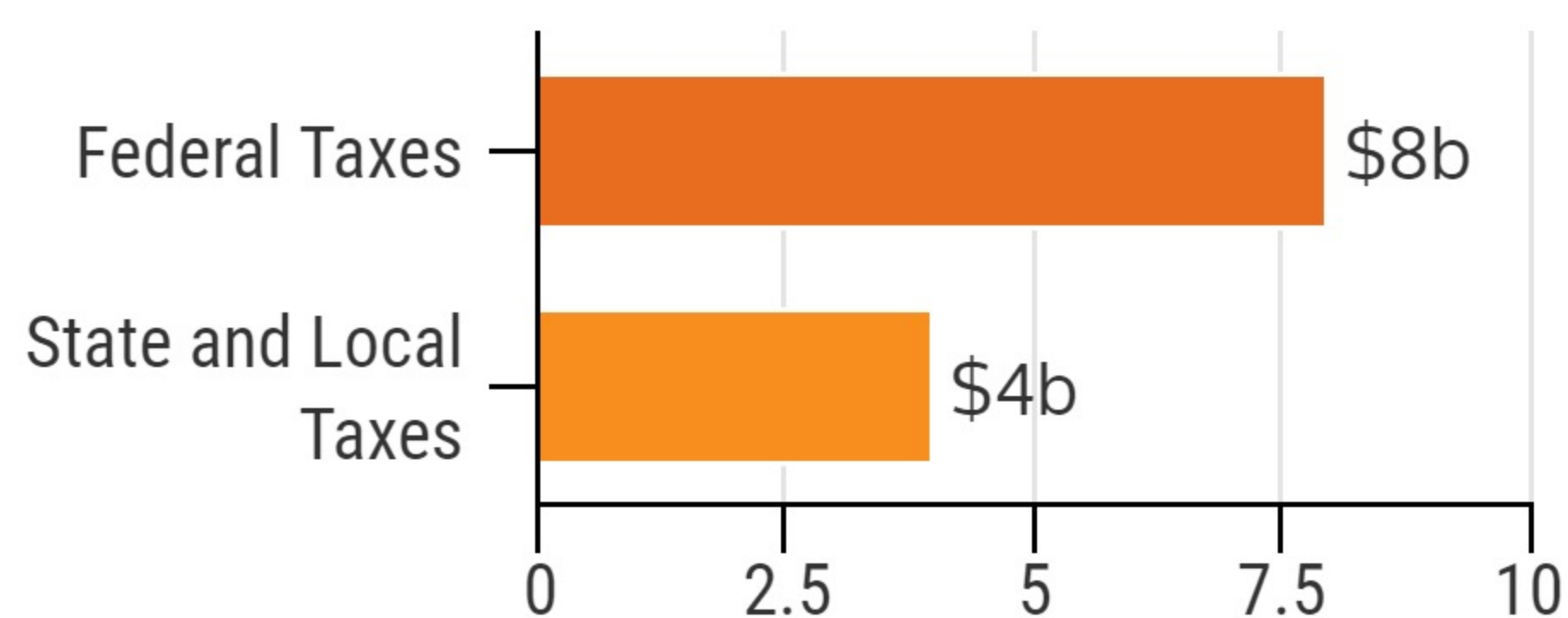
Museums in the United States contribute nearly \$50 billion dollars annually to the nation's economy.

State	GDP
1. California	\$6.6 billion
2. New York	\$5.4 billion
3. Texas	\$3.9 billion
4. Illinois	\$2.7 billion
5. Florida	\$2.3 billion

Top 5 States by GDP Contribution

## \$12b taxes

Even though many museums operate as nonprofits, they generate significant tax revenues to federal, state, and local governments.



## 726,000 jobs

Each year, the museum sector supports important jobs for people in every corner of the nation.



American Alliance of Museums



# Museums & Public Opinion

## Summary of Findings

The news for museums is excellent. National public opinion polling 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 them. The data speaks clearly, whether young or old, conservative or liberal, or a museum-goer or not, Americans value the museums in their communities.

**97%**

**Believe that museums are educational assets for their communities**

**89%**

**Believe that museums contribute important economic benefits to their community**

**96%**

**Would think positively of their elected officials taking legislative action to support museums**

**96%**

**Want federal funding for museums to be maintained or increased**

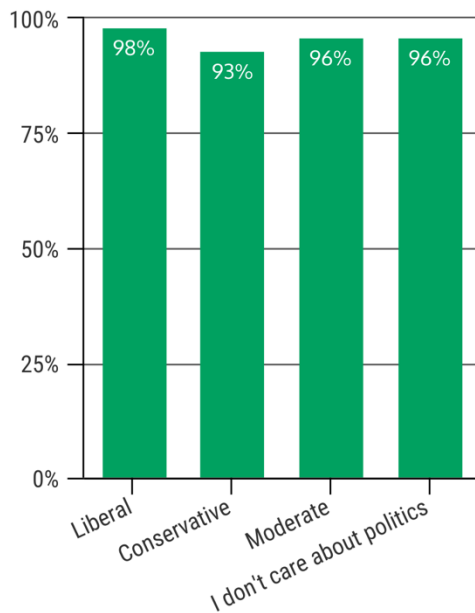


# Americans Want Their Lawmakers to Act in Support of Museums

Museums are widely valued for their educational and economic contributions, but Americans don't stop there: they expect their legislators to take action to support them. The vast majority of Americans would approve of lawmakers who take legislative action to support museums. This support is clearly a bipartisan consensus with more than 90% of respondents agreeing across all political affiliations. 95% of voters report they would approve if their lawmakers took action to support museums.

Amidst today's contentious political climate, few issues garner such consistent and high approval as the support of American museums.

## Political Persuasion



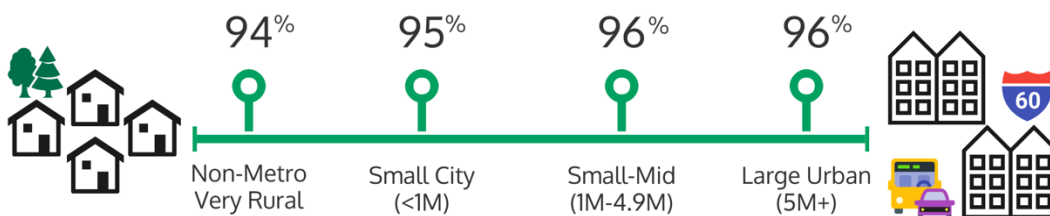
## Visitors to Museums



## Voters in Elections



## Community Size



Percentage of Americans who would approve of lawmakers who take action to support museums

# Museum Facts: At A Glance

## Museums Are Economic Engines



Museums support more than

**726,000**

American jobs.

Every direct job at a museum supports an additional job in the economy. This is a higher rate than many other industries.\*



Museums contribute

**\$50 billion**

to the US economy each year.

Museums and other nonprofit cultural organizations return more than \$5 in tax revenues for every \$1 they receive in funding from all levels of government.\*



The economic activity of museums generates more than \$12 billion in tax revenue, one-third of it going to state and local governments. Each job created by the museum sector results in

**\$16,495**

in additional revenue.\*



## Museums Are Trusted

The American public regards museums as highly trustworthy—ranking second only to friends and family, and significantly more trustworthy than researchers and scientists, NGOs generally, various news organizations, the government, corporations and business, and social media.



## People Love Museums

More people visited an art museum, science center, historic house or site, zoo, or aquarium in 2018 than attended a professional sporting event.



## Museums Are for Everyone

Museums are committed to ensuring that people of all backgrounds have access to high-quality museum experiences. In 2012, 37% of museums were free at all times or had suggested admission fees only; nearly all the rest offered discounts or free admission days.



## Museums Partner with Schools

Museums help teach the state and local curriculum, tailoring their programs in math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography, and social studies.

## Museums and the COVID-19 Pandemic:

Early in the pandemic, survey data confirmed

**1 out of 3**

of museum directors felt their museum may shutter permanently without immediate support...

...a threatened loss of

**12,000 museums**

as well as

**124,000 jobs.**

During the pandemic, Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Shuttered Venue Operator Grants (SVOG) provided critical lifelines.

Still, a recent survey shows:

attendance remains down

**38%** on average from pre-pandemic levels.

**17%** of directors still feel there is some risk of closing permanently without additional relief.

**60%** report experiencing pandemic-related financial losses since March 2020, with the average being a little over \$791,000.

Data from the Fourth National Snapshot of COVID-19 Impact on US Museums, conducted by AAM and Wilkening Consulting.

# Museum Facts: Details



## Museums and the COVID-19 Pandemic

- The pandemic has inflicted profound damage on US museums, the vast majority of which are 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organizations.<sup>1</sup>
- Early in the pandemic, essentially all museums were closed to the public. 33 percent of directors felt their museums were at some risk of permanent closure without immediate support—a threatened loss of 12,000 museums and 124,000 jobs.<sup>2</sup>
- While PPP and SVOG provided critical lifelines, a [2022 survey](#) shows attendance remains down 38 percent on average from pre-pandemic levels and 17 percent of directors still feel there is some risk of closing permanently without additional relief.<sup>3</sup>
- 60 percent of museums report experiencing pandemic-related financial losses since March 2020, with the average being a little over \$791,000. 60 percent of responding museums have budgets of \$1 million or less.<sup>4</sup>



## Museums Are Economic Engines (Pre-Pandemic data)

- Museums support over 726,000 American jobs.<sup>5</sup>
- Museums contribute \$50 billion to the U.S. economy each year.<sup>6</sup>
- Seventy-six percent of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural or heritage activities such as visiting museums. These travelers spend 60 percent more money on average than other leisure travelers.<sup>7</sup>
- The economic activity of museums generates over \$12 billion in tax revenue, one-third of it going to state and local governments. Each job created by the museum sector results in \$16,495 in additional tax revenue.<sup>8</sup>
- Every direct job at a museum supports an additional job in the economy. This is a higher rate than many other industries.<sup>9</sup>
- Museums and other nonprofit cultural organizations return more than \$5 in tax revenue for every \$1 they receive in funding from all levels of government.<sup>10</sup>



## Museums Are Community Anchors

- In determining America's Best Cities, *Bloomberg Business Week* placed the greatest weight on "leisure amenities [including density of museums], followed by educational metrics and economic metrics...then crime and air quality."<sup>11</sup>
- *Money Magazine's* annual 'Best Places to Live' survey incorporates the concentration of accredited museums.<sup>12</sup>



## Museums Serve the Whole Public

- More people visited an art museum, science center, historic house or site, zoo, or aquarium in 2018 than attended a professional sporting event.<sup>13</sup>
- Museum websites serve a diverse online community, including millions of teachers, parents, and students (including those students who are home-schooled).
- Museum volunteers contribute a million hours of service every week.<sup>14</sup>
- Support for museums is robust regardless of political persuasion. 96% of Americans would approve of lawmakers who acted to support museums. The number is consistently high for respondents who consider themselves politically liberal (97%), moderate (95%), or conservative (93%).<sup>15</sup>
- Many museums offer programs tailored to veterans and military families. In 2019 over 2,000 museums in all 50 states participated in the 10th year of the Blue Star Museums program, offering free summer admission to all active-duty and reserve personnel and their families.<sup>16</sup> In the past five years more than 4 million active duty members and their families have participated in the Blue Star Museums program, which is, on average, more than 800,000 visitors per year, and many other museums offer military discounts or free admission throughout the year. While impacted by the pandemic, the program returned for summer 2021.
- Museums also provide many social services, including programs for children on the autism spectrum, English as a Second Language classes, and programs for adults with Alzheimer's or other cognitive impairments.<sup>17</sup>
- Museums are committed to ensuring that people of all backgrounds have access to high quality experiences in their institutions. In 2012, 37% of museums were free at all times or had suggested admission fees only; nearly all the rest offered discounts or free admission days.<sup>18</sup>
- In 2014, IMLS launched Museums for All, a national access initiative. Today, more than 1000 participating museums in 50 states, DC, and the US Virgin Islands offer deeply discounted admission to visitors who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The program has reached over 5.8 million visitors.<sup>19</sup>
- About 26% of museums are located in rural areas<sup>20</sup>; other museums reach these communities with traveling vans, portable exhibits, and robust online resources.



### Museums Partner with Schools

- Museums spend over \$2 billion each year on education activities; the typical museum devotes three-quarters of its education budget to K-12 students.<sup>21</sup>
- Museums receive approximately 55 million visits each year from students in school groups.<sup>22</sup>
- Museums help teach the state and local curricula, tailoring their programs in math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography, and social studies.<sup>23</sup>
- Children who visited a museum during kindergarten had higher achievement scores in reading, mathematics, and science in third grade than children who did not. Children who are most at risk for deficits and delays in achievement also see this benefit.<sup>24</sup>



### Museums Are Trusted

- The American public regards museums as highly trustworthy—ranking second only to friends and family, and significantly more trustworthy than researchers and scientists, NGOs generally, various news organizations, the government, corporations and business, and social media.<sup>25</sup>
- Museums preserve and protect more than a billion objects.<sup>26</sup>
- The American public considers museums a more reliable source of historical information than books, teachers, or even personal accounts by relatives.<sup>27</sup>



### Museums and Public Opinion

- 97% of Americans believe that museums are educational assets for their communities.
- 89% believe that museums contribute important economic benefits to their community.
- 96% would think positively of their elected officials for taking legislative action to support museums.
- 96% want to maintain or increase federal funding for museums.<sup>28</sup>



### Museums Save Species

- In 2021, accredited zoos and aquariums (museums with living collections) spent \$209 million on field conservation projects in 117 countries.<sup>29</sup>
- Museums are involved with conservation breeding, habitat preservation, public education, field conservation, and supportive research to ensure survival for many of the planet's threatened or endangered species. Museums also conduct or facilitate research to advance the scientific knowledge of the animals in human care and to enhance the conservation of wild populations.



### Museums Improve Public Health

- Living in a community with cultural resources confers a five year advantage in cognitive age: museums and similar cultural organizations provide the biggest boost to cognitive health.<sup>30</sup>



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**The American Alliance of Museums  
Joined by National, Regional, and State Partner Organizations**

Cordially invites you to a Capitol Hill reception Celebrating Museums

Senators and Representatives are encouraged to share brief remarks celebrating museums in their states/districts.

**Tuesday, February 28, 2023 - 5:00-7:00 p.m.**

U.S. Capitol Visitor Center  
(Congressional Auditorium and Atrium)  
First Street & East Capitol Street

Please contact Barry Szczesny at [bszczesny@aam-us.org](mailto:bszczesny@aam-us.org)  
to RSVP or with questions.

The event is intended to be a "widely attended event," as that term is defined in guidance provided by the Senate Select Committee on Ethics with regard to Senate Rule 35, section 1(d) and the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct with regard to House Rule XXV, clause 5(a)(3).