

Legislative Agenda: Issues at a Glance

Museums—a large 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 96% 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, culturally-specific 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.

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

Despite its small size, the IMLS Office of Museum Services is the largest dedicated source of investment in our nation’s museums. OMS leadership and vital financial support is more important than ever to museums of every type, large and small, urban and rural, across our country. OMS provides museums essential help to navigate change and continue to improve their services to better enable them to champion lifelong learning, strengthen community engagement and advance collections stewardship and access to our nation’s cultural heritage. Grants are awarded in every state, but current funding has allowed the agency to fund much less than half 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 several years, with 113 Representatives and 41 Senators signing the FY 2024 appropriations letters on its behalf. In FY 2023, Congress provided \$295 million to IMLS, of which \$55.5 million was directed to the Office of Museum Services. With this funding, OMS provided 317 grants totaling \$53 million to museums and related organizations in 49 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

We urge Congress to:

- provide at least \$55.5 million for FY 2024 (level with current FY 2023) and at least \$65.5 million for FY 2025 funding for the IMLS Office of Museum Services, a much needed increase accounting for inflation and public need for museum services.

Tax Policy

Contributions to 501(c)(3) charities such as museums are tax-deductible, incentivizing those who itemize deductions to give more. A large majority of museums are 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organizations. 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 non-itemizers. **We ask members of the House and Senate to:**

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- include a universal charitable deduction, i.e., a deduction for non-itemizers, in any forthcoming tax package. We also urge members of Congress to cosponsor the Charitable Act (S. 566/H.R. 3435), which would renew and expand the charitable tax deduction for non-itemizers. 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.

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 (approximately 40% of its annual budget) to state humanities councils in every state and US territory. NEH received \$207 million in FY 2023 appropriations.

- **We urge Congress to** provide at least \$207 million for the NEH for FY 2024, level with FY 2023, and robust funding for FY 2025.

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 40% of its grant funds to state arts agencies for re-granting. NEA received \$207 million in FY 2023 appropriations.

- **We urge Congress to** provide at least \$207 million for the NEA for FY 2024, level with FY 2023, and robust funding for FY 2025.

Elementary and Secondary Education

Museums are significant 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](#). 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 goals, which could make it easier for schools to work with museums.

- We urge members of Congress to support and cosponsor the [Civics Secures Democracy \(CSD\) Act](#) (S. 4384/H.R.1814), which would create grants for states and districts to support and expand access to U.S. history and civics to meet the needs of today's students and our constitutional democracy.

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- 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 60% 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. In addition, many museums benefit from Higher Education Act (HEA) program funding.

- We support legislation that ensures Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) is accessible and achievable. 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.

Lifelong STEM Engagement

As museums are key community infrastructure, ensuring Americans’ lifelong engagement in STEM and contributing to America’s leadership in scientific research, we urge Congress to provide robust funding for a variety of programs that support lifelong STEM education and public engagement and research around many of the most important and urgent scientific issues. In particular, we ask 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;
- regard museums and other institutions engaged in informal STEM education as vital components of the STEM education ecosystem;
- fund the following programs at levels that 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; and

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- 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.

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 the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), and increase the authorization to no less than \$250 million annually; support FY 2025 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 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 250th 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. Include museums in, and provide robust funding for, programs for federal agencies tasked with carrying out America 250 programming and commemorations in the FY 2025 appropriations process.

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

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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** also known as "[Renew America's 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. 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.

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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 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.

Background: Museums and the COVID-19 Pandemic

The pandemic inflicted considerable damage on US museums, a large majority of which are 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organizations. While the museum field is making strides in its recovery efforts, it will take years to fully rebound to pre-pandemic levels of staffing, revenue, and attendance. [Survey data](#) shows two-thirds of museums continue to experience reduced attendance, averaging 71% of their pre-pandemic attendance. 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 deepen their impact in their communities.

During the 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, and 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, donated their PPE and scientific equipment to fight COVID-19, and served as vaccination centers.

IMLS Office of Museum Services Funding

Request

We urge Congress to:

- provide at least \$55.5 million for FY 2024 funding (level with current FY 2023) and at least \$65.5 million for FY 2025 funding for the IMLS Office of Museum Services, a much needed increase accounting for inflation and public need for museum services.

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. Despite its small size, the IMLS Office of Museum Services is the largest dedicated source of investment in our nation’s museums. OMS leadership and vital financial support is more important than ever to museums of every type, large and small, urban and rural, across our country. OMS provides museums essential support to navigate change and continue to improve their services to better enable them to champion lifelong learning, strengthen community engagement and advance collections stewardship and access to our nation’s cultural heritage.

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 level). The House Labor-HHS-Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee in July approved a bill providing level funding for IMLS for FY 2024 while the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a bill that would cut \$3.25 million from OMS museum programs.

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 113 Representatives and 41 Senators signing FY 2024 appropriations letters on its behalf.
- In FY 2023, Congress provided \$295 million to IMLS, of which \$55.5 million was directed to the Office of Museum Services. With this funding, OMS provided 317 grants totaling \$53 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.

IMLS Office of Museum Services Funding

- There is high demand for funding from the IMLS Office of Museum Services. In FY 2023 OMS received 749 applications requesting more than \$122 million, but current funding has allowed the agency to fund less than half (40%) of the highly rated grant applications it receives.
- \$65.5 million or more in FY 2025 funding would allow OMS to increase its grant capacity for museums, funds which museums will need to help continue to serve their communities. This important funding increase would still be greatly shy of the high demand of \$122 million in FY 2023 in highly rated grant applications the agency received.
- The Inspire! Grants for Small Museums program, designed to encourage small institutions to apply for IMLS funding, generated 216 applications in FY 2023. IMLS made awards to 59 museums through this program, demonstrating a continuing need for support for the nation's small museums.
- In 2014, IMLS launched Museums for All, a national access initiative. Today, more than 1,200 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 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' continued 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.

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	TBD

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

IMLS Office of Museum Services Funding

- Museums have strong public support: [Museums and Public Opinion](#), a 2017 national public opinion poll, showed that 96% 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.

FY 2025 SENATE appropriations letter in support of the IMLS Office of Museum Services

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) 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.

The pandemic inflicted considerable damage on US museums, a large majority of which are 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organizations. While the museum field is making strides in its recovery efforts, it will take years to fully rebound to pre-pandemic levels of staffing, revenue, and attendance. [Survey data](#) shows two-thirds of museums continue to experience reduced attendance, averaging 71% of their pre-pandemic attendance. 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 impact in their communities.

Moving forward, OMS leadership and vital financial support is more important than ever to museums large and small, urban and rural, across our country. OMS provides museums essential help to navigate change and continue to improve their services to better enable them to champion lifelong learning, strengthen community engagement and advance collections stewardship and access to our nation's cultural heritage.

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 is currently being reached and many highly rated grant applications go unfunded.

Museums are essential community infrastructure vital to their communities. 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 families in need.

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 2025 to support the important work museums do in our states. This vital funding will aid museums of all types and enable them to bolster our economy 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.

Kirsten Gillibrand
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)

FY 2025 HOUSE appropriations letter in support of the IMLS Office of Museum Services

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 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.

The pandemic inflicted considerable damage on US museums, a large majority of which are 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organizations. While the museum field is making strides in its recovery efforts, it will take years to fully rebound to pre-pandemic levels of staffing, revenue, and attendance. [Survey data](#) shows two-thirds of museums continue to experience reduced attendance, averaging 71% of their pre-pandemic attendance. 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 impact in their communities.

Moving forward, OMS leadership and vital financial support is more important than ever to museums large and small, urban and rural, across our country. OMS provides museums essential help to navigate change and continue to improve their services to better enable them to champion lifelong learning, strengthen community engagement and advance collections stewardship and access to our nation's cultural heritage.

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 their communities. 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 families in need.

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 2025 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

Brian Fitzpatrick
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, Hunt VanderToll with Rep. Barr at hunt.vandertoll@mail.house.gov, Evan Johnston with Rep. Pingree at evan.johnston@mail.house.gov, or Matthew Clarkin with Rep. Fitzpatrick at matthew.clarkin@mail.house.gov)

Tax Policy

Request

We urge members of the House and Senate to:

- include a universal charitable deduction (UCD) in any forthcoming tax package. A UCD allows taxpayers who do not itemize to deduct charitable gifts. We also urge members to cosponsor the Charitable Act (S. 566/H.R. 3435), which would renew and expand the UCD that expired at the end of 2021.

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. Smaller gifts increased during the pandemic due to the enactment of the temporary UCD, which allowed taxpayers to deduct up to \$300 (\$600 for couples), and they have decreased since it lapsed. Moreover, the percentage of Americans who donate to charity has been on a long-term decline, sinking from two-thirds twenty years ago to under half now.

Talking Points

- Charitable giving accounts for more than one-third of museums' operating funds.
- The CARES Act of 2020 established a limited and temporary deduction for non-itemizers at the start of the pandemic. Charitable giving increased following its enactment and dropped after it expired.
- A universal charitable deduction democratizes charity by incentivizing all taxpayers to contribute, regardless of income.
- It is broadly supported across the [entire charitable sector](#).

Status

- Bipartisan bills have been introduced in both the House and the Senate to renew and expand the universal charitable deduction. They would temporarily renew the deduction and expand it to nearly \$4,900 for individuals and over \$9,700 for couples. Both bills have equal numbers of Republican and Democratic cosponsors.
- **Senators** who wish to cosponsor should contact the offices of James Lankford (R-OK) or Chris Coons (D-DE). **Representatives** should contact the offices of Blake Moore (R-UT) or Danny Davis (D-IL).

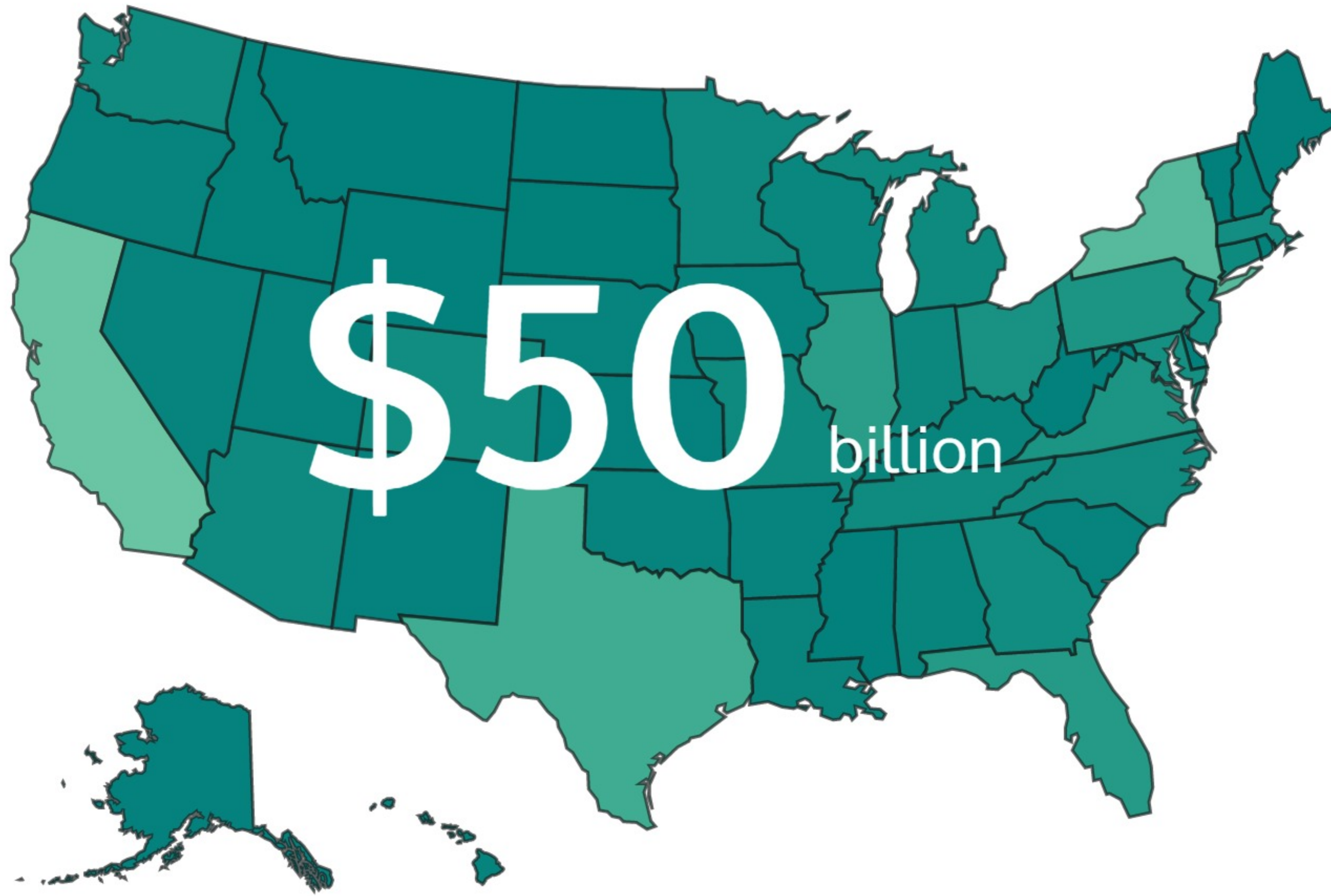
Facts and Figures

More information on how 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.



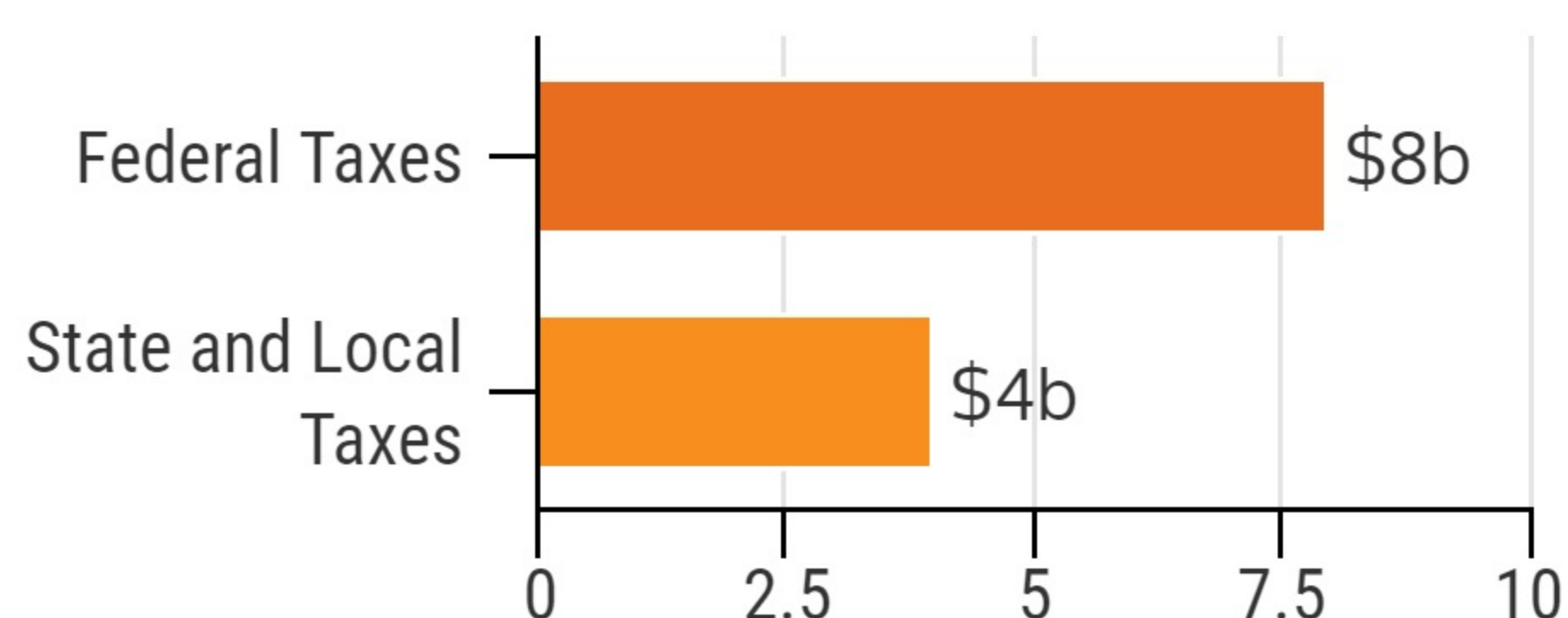
Museums in the United States contribute nearly \$50 billion dollars annually to the nation's economy.

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



American
Alliance of
Museums

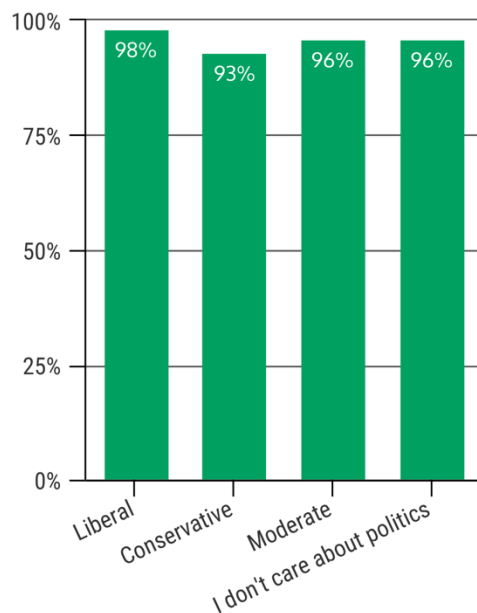
Visit www.aam-us.org/programs/advocacy to download the full report.

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



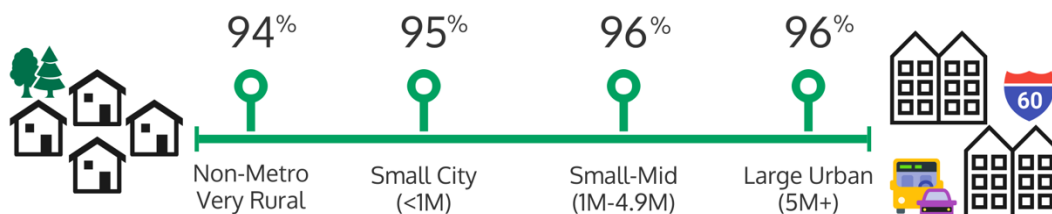
Visitors to Museums



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:

Two-thirds
of museums continue to
experience reduced
attendance.

Museums experiencing reduced attendance average **71%** of their pre-pandemic attendance.

30% of museums are experiencing decreases in net operating performance compared to pre-pandemic levels.

26% of responding museums have not recovered to their pre-pandemic staffing levels.

60% Of museums recruiting for job openings, 60% report trouble filling open positions, primarily among front-line roles.

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. While the museum field is making strides in its recovery efforts, it will take years to fully rebound to pre-pandemic levels of staffing, revenue, and attendance.¹
- Survey data shows two-thirds of museums continue to experience reduced attendance; these institutions average 71% of their pre-pandemic attendance.²
- Financial recovery from the damage of the pandemic has been inconsistent, with 30% of museums seeing decreases in net operating performance, 39% experiencing increases, and 31% seeing no change compared to 2019.³
- 26% of responding museums have not recovered to their pre-pandemic staffing levels. Of museums recruiting for job openings, 60% report trouble filling open positions, primarily among front-line roles. Many museums are changing staff compensation packages and working conditions, including half of respondents who have shrunk the gap between their institution's highest and lowest salaries and 50% implementing new initiatives to enhance staff wellness.⁴



Museums Are Economic Engines (Pre-pandemic data)

- Museums support over 726,000 American jobs.⁵
- Museums contribute \$50 billion to the U.S. economy each year.⁶
- 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.⁷
- 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.⁸
- Every direct job at a museum supports an additional job in the economy. This is a higher rate than many other industries.⁹
- 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.¹⁰



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."¹¹
- *Money Magazine's* annual 'Best Places to Live' survey incorporates the concentration of accredited museums.¹²



Museums Serve the Whole Public

- More people visit art museums, science centers, historic houses or sites, zoos, or aquariums than attend professional sporting events.¹³
- 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.¹⁴
- 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%).¹⁵
- 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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷
- 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.¹⁸
- Since 2014, more than 1,200 museums located in all 50 US states, the District of Columbia, and the US Virgin Islands have facilitated more than 8 million museum visits for low-income Americans through the Museums for All program.¹⁹
- About 26% of museums are located in rural areas²⁰; 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.²¹
- Museums receive approximately 55 million visits each year from students in school groups.²²
- 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.²³
- 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.²⁴



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.²⁵
- Museums preserve and protect more than a billion objects.²⁶
- The American public considers museums a more reliable source of historical information than books, teachers, or even personal accounts by relatives.²⁷



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.²⁸
- Three-quarters of the public think museums are an important part of our civil society, and that museums have a role in supporting civic knowledge and participation.²⁹



Museums Save Species

- In 2022, accredited zoos and aquariums (museums with living collections) spent over \$252 million on field conservation projects in 119 countries.³⁰
- 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.³¹

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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 27, 2024 - 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
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).