

SUPPORT AMERICA'S MUSEUMS
INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES (IMLS)
PROMOTING LIFELONG LEARNING AND PROTECTING OUR NATIONAL HERITAGE

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to:

- **Support an appropriation of \$50 million for the Office of Museum Services (OMS) within IMLS in the FY 2010 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill to promote and support lifelong learning and to protect our national heritage.**

Office of Museum Services Appropriations, FY 2003 to present (in millions of dollars)

Fiscal Year	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08
Appropriation	25.1	27.3	30.3	31.8	31.8	31.7

Notes: Figures above are not adjusted for inflation and do not include program administration. Source: IMLS.

- **Reauthorize the Office of Museum Services (OMS) within IMLS at \$95 million incrementally over the 5-year reauthorization period. These additional funds would be used to strengthen existing national programs; initiate state needs assessments; devote new funding to conservation endowment grants, traveling exhibitions and a new program to help smaller museums compete more effectively for federal grants; and establish a federal-state partnership that dedicates funding to a state grant program for museums.**

TALKING POINTS

IMLS helps museums to serve their communities. Federal leadership spotlights the remarkable resources that museums bring to education and to communities across the United States. Peer-reviewed IMLS grants assure state, local, and private funders that a museum has met high national standards and is worthy of their additional support.

- *IMLS advances the role of museums in lifelong learning.* Its grants address the full range of learning opportunities in museums, including creating family and adult programs, working with schools to develop curriculum and programs, developing exhibitions, and generating Internet content. American museums provide over 18 million instructional hours to K–12 schoolchildren. Seventy-one percent work with school curriculum specialists to tailor programs to support local and state curriculum standards, according to the 2003 edition of the IMLS's report *True Needs, True Partners*.
- *IMLS helps museums care for our national heritage.* Museum collections are a public trust for future generations. According to the IMLS-sponsored 2005 *Heritage Health Index*, **U.S. collections are at risk** due to exposure to hazards and lack of proper storage (e.g., overcrowding and lack of proper environmental controls); lack of disaster and emergency plans; and limited staff resources and expertise in conservation and preservation. U.S. collections include over 4.8 billion artifacts held by more than 30,000 archives, historical societies, museums, libraries, scientific research collections, and archeological repositories. IMLS grants are awarded for collection condition assessments, management, and care.
- *IMLS levels the playing field.* Many museums are located in areas where they are the only cultural resource and where significant private support is simply not available. IMLS specifically targets support for these institutions, providing vital competitive grants.

DETAILS OF REAUTHORIZATION REQUEST

The IMLS package request supported by the museum community links newly authorized mechanisms with increases through the annual appropriations process:

- **Increased Funding:** Reauthorize IMLS' Office of Museum Services at \$95 million (increase from current authorization of \$38.6 million and current appropriations level of approximately \$31 million). This proposed increase would happen incrementally over the 5 years, with the goal of reaching a \$95 million annual appropriation by the end of the 5-year authorization.

(continued)

- **Strengthen Existing National Programs:** Provide an increase for current national programs that have repeatedly been insufficiently funded. This increase would allow for enhanced investments in technology upgrades, lifelong community learning, capacity building, collection management, community engagement, and developing the next generation of museum professionals, among others important efforts.
- **State Needs Assessments:** Once funding exceeds \$45 million, appropriate up to \$2 million for states to conduct needs assessment, which are an important step toward providing grants directly to each state.
- **Conservation, Traveling Exhibits, and Helping Smaller Museums:** As the appropriations level rises from \$45 million to \$72 million, establish new grants for conservation endowments and traveling exhibitions, as well as a program to help small museums more effectively compete for federal grants.
- **Grants to States:** Once the appropriations level exceeds \$72 million, the IMLS Director would have discretion to provide up to \$20 million of any annual appropriation in excess of \$72 million toward a states grant program. Once the appropriations level exceeds \$92 million, the IMLS Director would have discretion to provide up to 50 percent of the excess toward the state grant program, with at least 50 percent going toward enhancing national programs.
- **Evaluation:** After the state grant program has been in existence for two years (not including the state needs assessments), conduct a study to evaluate the progress and viability of the program.

BACKGROUND

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is an independent federal agency dedicated to creating and sustaining a nation of learners. Its **Office of Museum Services (OMS)** awards grants to museums to carry out their public service, educational, and conservation roles in connecting the whole of society to the cultural, historical, and scientific understanding that constitute our heritage. OMS supports all types of museums including art, history, science, children's, specialized institutions, and living collections such as zoos and aquariums.

When Congress last reauthorized IMLS in 2003, it underscored the essential contributions of museums to a democratic society. America's more than 17,500 **museums attract more than 1 billion visitors annually** including families, children, and individuals seeking enriched cultural experiences and learning opportunities.

Funding for OMS museum grants has been essentially flat for the past four fiscal years. Meanwhile:

- attendance has increased;
- the demand for museum educational services is growing;
- collections are at risk; and
- museum staff need professional development in conservation, education, and technology.

Museums are among the most used, trusted, and valued institutions in their communities. A 2007 study commissioned by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and conducted by researchers from the University of North Carolina, summarizes the results of a survey of 6,000 adults:

- Over 67 percent of all adults in the United States visited a museum in the past year.
- Children aged 3–17 years made 97.8 million visits in the past year.
- The vast majority of adults who visited a museum in the past year did so multiple times.
- Eighty-seven percent of visitors said their visits helped them “learn something new.”
- Solid majorities said that the visits had encouraged further learning, broadened their perspective, or inspired them.
- Well over one-third said that their visits had “resulted in a new way of thinking.”
- When asked to rate the trustworthiness of exhibits or displays on a scale of one to five, visitors gave an average score of 4.62.

Finally, museums serve as economic and social anchors for their neighborhood and communities.