

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

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**ACTION NEEDED**

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We urge Congress to:

- **Support an increase of \$15 million for grants to museums within the IMLS budget in the FY 2009 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.

**TALKING POINTS**

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*IMLS helps museums to serve their communities.* Federal leadership puts a spotlight on 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 that must be protected for future generations. According to the IMLS-sponsored 2005 *Heritage Health Index*, the first survey conducted of the condition and preservation needs of our nation's collections, **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.
- **IMLS plays a critical leadership role by convening national experts and commissioning national research** (see [Heritage Health Index](#) above and [About Museums](#) below).

**BACKGROUND**

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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.

*(continued)*

## **BACKGROUND (CONT.)**

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In reauthorizing IMLS in 2003, Congress underscored the essential contributions of museums to a democratic society. America's more than 17,500 **museums attract over 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 three 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.

The president has requested an increase for 2009, but it is not sufficient to meet these needs.

## **ABOUT MUSEUMS**

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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 U.S. visited a museum in the past year.
- Adults made a total of 1.0 billion visits.
- 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.

The outcome of museum visits is notable:

- 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.