

As the 111th Congress gets underway, we applaud your efforts to create and save jobs, jumpstart our economy, and invest in America's infrastructure through the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*. As this bill moves forward, we ask you to consider the vital role that museums play in our community and to include them in this important effort to enhance the educational infrastructure of our nation.

Specifically, we offer the following recommendations:

- **We strongly urge you to delete language in Sec. 1109 prohibiting zoos and aquariums from receiving any funds in this Act.** Zoos and aquariums have tremendous public benefit for environmental education and wildlife conservation. Infrastructure investments that support these living collections will be critical in the economic recovery of cities and localities.
- **We support the proposed \$50 million to preserve jobs in the non-profit arts sector** – one that is threatened by declines in philanthropic and other resources during the current economic downturn – to be administered by the National Endowment for the Arts. **We seek an additional \$10 million for the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS)** to preserve jobs in the nonprofit museum sector. Many museums were already struggling just to maintain essential services, and the aforementioned decline in giving makes this situation even more dire.
- **We support the \$1.8 billion proposed for the National Park Service (NPS).** This funding is critical for much-needed historic preservation efforts, and would help protect NPS' 27,000 historically significant structures (many nationally listed), 66,000 archeological sites, and 115 million objects in NPS museum collections, many of which are in disrepair.
- We support the proposed revitalization efforts on the National Mall, including \$150 million to eliminate the maintenance backlog at the Smithsonian, our nation's largest museum complex.
- We support the proposed \$1 billion for Community Development Block Grants, which will bolster critical community services and infrastructure needs and would be administered by local governments.
- We support the proposed \$100 million for improving instruction in math, science, and engineering through the National Science Foundation.
- We support education initiatives including the proposed \$13 billion for Title I Help for Disadvantaged Kids and the proposed \$300 million for Improving Teacher Quality. Museums frequently play a role in training educators in underserved areas.
- Finally, we support the proposed \$200 million for AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National Service to address significant job losses in the nonprofit sector. This investment in national service will help communities meet their increasing social service needs.

[option to add details about your museum]

Because the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* is aimed at creating and saving jobs while building the nation's infrastructure, we ask that you consider the important and unique ways in which museums contribute to the nation's infrastructure:

- Museums offer after-school programs for at-risk youth;
- Museums work with school districts to both train educators and help teach the curriculum;
- Museums provide exciting learning opportunities for Americans of all ages;
- Museums are a prime destination for tourists and generate valuable income that helps spur the economy;
- Museums provide safe and affordable activities that strengthen families;
- Museums preserve and protect more than 1 billion historical and culturally significant objects; and
- Americans view museums as one of the most important resources for educating our children and as one of the most trustworthy sources of objective information.

Museums employ more than a quarter-million Americans, spend an estimated \$14.5 billion annually, and rank among the top three family vacation destinations. In fact, visitors to cultural and heritage destinations stay 53% longer and spend 36% more money than other kinds of tourists. Unfortunately, the economic downturn has forced museums to struggle just to maintain essential services.

Many museums have been a central component of community redevelopment efforts. Our nation's mayors understand that museums are a true investment in their communities. The U.S. Conference of Mayors has recently publicized a list of "shovel ready" projects, which include many museum-related initiatives. Mayors understand that museums are economic engines: creating jobs, promoting tourism, and attracting businesses and a skilled workforce to communities. A renewed investment in the Community Development Block Grant will allow local communities to play a role in determining the best ways to stimulate their local economy.

Thank you for your consideration. Museums stand ready to work with you as part of the solution for bringing America through our current economic challenges. Please contact me if I can provide any additional information about my museum's efforts in our community.