



Advocacy Efforts for IMLS
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No doubt most of you know that AASLH has for the past several years provided leadership for an ad hoc group of museum service providers (state, regional, national) focused on substantially increased funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Formerly known as the Federal Formula Grant Coalition and now known as the Federal-State Partnerships Coalition, this group of 63 organizations was formed to advocate for federal grants that would come from IMLS to each state and then be distributed to museums based on the evidence of need as articulated at the state level, not the need determined at the national level. The Coalition has worked hard to be sure the museum field understands the benefits from such a program, and that members of Congress who work on IMLS legislation hear from the field that they should support the movement when IMLS is reauthorized (scheduled for 9/09).

In addition to working on getting federal-state partnerships included in the next reauthorization of IMLS, the Coalition has also been working hard for increased appropriations for FY 2010. Remember that reauthorization happens about every five years and sets parameters for funding. Appropriations happen every year and bills passed in appropriations fund federal agencies. The president's budget recommends flat funding for IMLS in FY 2010, but the Coalition has worked with its sister organizations--American Association of Museums (AAM), Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC), and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)—to ask for an additional \$15 million taking IMLS appropriations for museums for FY 2010 from \$35 million to \$50 million.

The first order of business was to get members of the House to agree to circulate a "Dear Colleague" letter requesting the House Appropriations Subcommittee support such an increase. Believe it or not, this is the first time (at least as far back as I know) that such a letter has been circulated in Congress. Rep. Paul Tonko and Rep. Louise Slaughter, both of New York, took the lead in circulating the letter. The Coalition and our sister organizations contacted members of the House and asked our constituents to do the same. The result? A letter to the House Appropriations Subcommittee signed by 25 members of the House. That's amazing for our first time out on such an effort. You can find a copy of the letter at <http://aaslh.org/documents/Tonko-SlaughterDearColleagueFINAL609.pdf>. Look at it and see if your Representative signed on. If not, you may want to ask him/her why not.

What's happening right now, you ask? The House Appropriations Committee passed the bill on Friday 7/24 at the same level as the President's budget – flat funding for museums at IMLS. Now it goes to the Senate for markup, tentatively scheduled for Tuesday 8/4, and the process

runs its course through the Senate. Finally to a conference committee to reconcile any differences between the House bill and the Senate bill.

How can you help? You can contact your senators to let them know they need to support an increase for IMLS. And, of course, as we gear up to work on the authorization for IMLS late this summer or early fall, please be at the ready to contact your members of Congress to let them know how you feel about federal funding for America's museums.

You can find out more about the work of the Federal-State Partnerships Coalition at the AASLH web site <http://aaslh.org/Federal-StatePartnershipsforMuseums.htm>. I can't tell you how important it is that you become an engaged advocate for your work. AASLH and others can lead the way, but frankly, if museums don't follow we'll never be able to secure additional funding through IMLS or any other source.

Make advocacy a part of the way you do business. When you get a request from AASLH or others asking you to contact your members of Congress, do so immediately. Help us to help you!

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