

To: The Museum Field

From: American Association of Museums (AAM)  
American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)  
Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD)  
Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC)  
Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)  
Mountain-Plains Museums Association (MPMA)  
California Association of Museums (CAM)  
Museum Association of Arizona (MAA)  
Museum Association of New York (MANY)  
Virginia Association of Museums (VAM)

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## RE: IMLS Reauthorization

As you know, we have been engaged in a longstanding conversation about how best to approach reauthorization of the Institute of Museum and Library Services' Office of Museum Services, which is due to occur by September, 2009. Some have specifically advocated for a new program to provide grants to states (the primary idea behind the Federal Formula Grant Coalition), to facilitate statewide support for museums, with funds re-granted according to each state's needs. Others have advocated for strengthening national programs and have expressed concern about how a state grant program would affect existing national programs and how states would handle this responsibility since there is not currently an entity set up in each state to handle such a program.

What we all can agree upon is that museums need and deserve far more federal support, both to strengthen existing programs at IMLS and to pursue a new strategy to support museums directly on the state level. Therefore, representatives from across the museum field – from AAM, AASLH, AAMD, ASTC, AZA, along with several state and regional associations and members of the Federal Formula Coalition – were convened to develop a package approach to reauthorization that would accommodate the needs of the entire museum field. The group was guided by two principles: First, that a state grant program should be developed carefully so as to augment, rather than compete with, current programs at IMLS. Second, that we need to be united as a field in order for any IMLS reauthorization to be successful.

We are pleased to announce that we have worked together to reach a carefully constructed agreement to pursue the following strategies in IMLS reauthorization, which links some of the newly authorized mechanisms to 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.

**Strengthen Existing National Programs:** This provides a significant increase for current national programs that have repeatedly been insufficiently funded. The proposed increase would allow for enhanced investments in areas such as technology upgrades, lifelong community learning, capacity building, collection management, community engagement, collecting research about the museum field, and developing the next generation of museum professionals, among others important efforts.

**State Needs Assessments:** Once the annual appropriations level exceeds \$45 million, up to \$2 million would be appropriated for states to conduct needs assessments. The needs assessments are an important step toward establishing a program to provide grants directly to each state.

**Conservation, Traveling Exhibits, and Helping Smaller Museums:** As the annual appropriations level rises from \$45 million to \$72 million, IMLS would establish new grants for conservation and traveling exhibitions, as well as a program to help small museums more effectively compete for federal grants.

**Grants to States:** Once the annual 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. Such a state grant program would include states that have both completed their needs assessments and have an approved five-year plan on how the funds would be used. Once the appropriations level exceeds \$92 million, the IMLS Director would have discretion to provide up to 50% of any additional funds toward the state grant program.

**Evaluation:** After the state grant program has been in existence for two years (not including the state needs assessments), a study would be conducted to evaluate the progress and viability of the state grant program.

In addition to our agenda for the reauthorization of IMLS, we will also be developing a broad legislative agenda on issues such as No Child Left Behind, tax-exempt status, historic preservation, health insurance coverage, intellectual property, charitable giving, and much more. This will be unveiled formally at Museums Advocacy Day, scheduled for February 23-24, 2009.

As we head into a new year with a new president and Congress, we look forward to working with the entire museum field to move our consensus agenda forward.

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