

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2011

The Honorable Dennis Rehberg
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services
and Education
2358B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services
and Education
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rehberg and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We are writing to thank you for your support for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)'s Office of Museum Services (OMS) and to urge the Subcommittee to support \$35 million for OMS in the FY 2012 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.

The demand for museum services is greater than ever. At a time when school resources are strained and many families cannot afford to travel or make ends meet, museums are working overtime to fill the gaps – providing more than 18 million instructional hours to schoolchildren, bringing art and cultural heritage, dynamic exhibitions and living specimens into local communities, partnering with other nonprofits to encourage national service and volunteerism, and offering free or reduced admission. Museums are part of a robust nonprofit community working to address our nation's greatest challenges, from creating energy efficient public buildings to collecting food, funding and other resources for needy families and individuals.

Unfortunately, museums are struggling significantly in these difficult economic times. They are being forced to cut back on hours, educational programming, community services and jobs. And according to the 2005 *Heritage Health Index*, at least 190 million artifacts are at risk, suffering from light damage and harmful and insecure storage conditions. Many museums also rely heavily on philanthropic donations to keep admission rates low and provide new exhibitions for their communities. According to a 2009 report by the Giving USA Foundation, museums and other cultural organizations saw their charitable donations fall by nearly 10 percent in 2008.

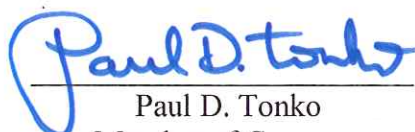
The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is the primary federal agency responsible for supporting the nation's more than 17,500 museums, and its Office of Museum Services has been essentially flat funded over the past several years. Although the agency has been successful in creating and supporting advancements in areas such as technology, lifelong community learning and conservation and preservation efforts, only a small fraction of the nation's museums are currently being reached, and many highly rated grant applications go unfunded each year.

In 2010, the Institute of Museum and Library Services was unanimously reauthorized by both the House and Senate. The agency is highly accountable, and its competitive, peer-reviewed grants serve every state. The reauthorization contained several provisions to further support museums, particularly at the state level, but much of the recently authorized activities cannot be accomplished without sustained funding.

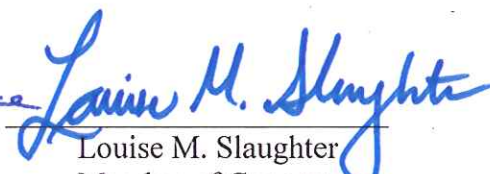
We urge the Subcommittee to support \$35 million (level funding relative to FY 2010) for the IMLS Office of Museum Services for FY 2012 to support the important work museums are doing in our communities, especially in these difficult economic times. This vital funding will aid museums of all types – aquariums, arboretums, archaeological museums, art museums, botanical gardens, children's museums, culturally specific museums, historic sites, history museums, maritime museums, military museums, natural history museums, nature centers, planetariums, science and technology centers, zoological parks, and other types of museums – and enable them to continue serving our schools and communities and preserving our cultural heritage for future generations.

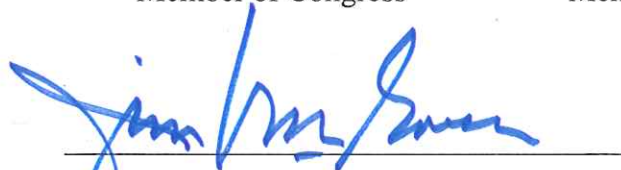
Again, we appreciate the Subcommittee's prior support for OMS and request this investment to strengthen and sustain the work of our nation's museums.

Sincerely,


Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress


Leonard Lance
Member of Congress


Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress

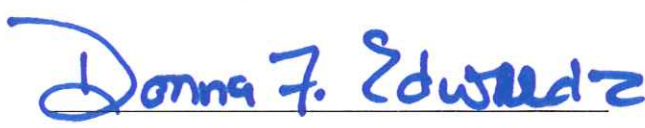








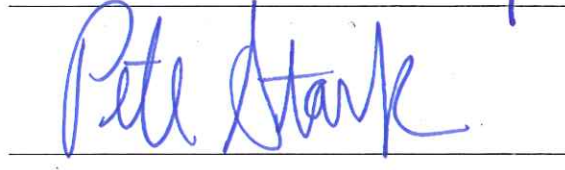












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