



IMLS Reauthorization

Request

- We urge Congress to enact legislation reauthorizing the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), similar to S. 3391 introduced during the 114th Congress.

Introduction

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is the primary federal agency responsible for helping museums connect people to information and ideas. Its Office of Museum Services (OMS) supports all types of museums—including aquariums, arboretums, art museums, botanical gardens, children’s museums, historic sites, history museums, military museums, natural history museums, nature centers, planetariums, science & technology centers, zoos, and more—in their work to educate students, preserve and digitize collections, and connect with their communities.

Reauthorization

IMLS has been regularly reauthorized by Congress with broad support, most recently in 2010 with a funding authorization of \$38.6 million for the Office of Museum Services. In September 2016, Senators Jack Reed (D-RI), Thad Cochran (R-MS), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), and Susan Collins (R-ME) introduced S. 3391, The Museum and Library Services Act of 2016. Sixty-three national, regional, and state museum associations wrote in support of the legislation.

The Museum and Library Services Act of 2016 contained a number of provisions specifically supported by the museum field. It proposed to:

- Formally authorize a 21st Century Museum Professional Program, to improve the recruitment, preparation, and professional development of museum professionals, especially those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds.
- Maintain the agency’s existing authority to support museum activities at both the state and regional level, while adding regional museum collaboration to its “Purpose” section, akin to how state museum collaboration is currently referenced.
- Add a new emphasis on ensuring that every American has access to high-quality museum experiences.
- Maintain and augment the agency’s research, data collection, and analysis about museums and libraries.
- Establish new reporting to ensure that the agency sufficiently collaborates with museum and library organizations at the national, regional, and state level on its research and data collection activities.
- Include additional federal entities on the list of potential interagency partnerships, allowing IMLS to expand its collaborative efforts with other agencies and magnify support for museums and libraries.
- Update the agency’s governance, so that it operates more closely in alignment with other federal cultural agencies.
- Reauthorize the agency for six years.



Talking Points

- The Institute of Museum and Library Services has strong bipartisan support, and has been lauded for its peer-reviewed, highly competitive grant programs.
- By leveraging significant private, state, and local funding, OMS grants amplify a small federal investment in museums for maximum impact in the community.
- In addition to awarding grants that benefit individual museums and communities, IMLS also awards National Leadership Grants for Museums, which support projects with the potential to advance the profession so that museums can improve services for the American public.
- 37 percent of museums are free at all times. Through IMLS' Museums for All initiative, many museums also offer free or greatly reduced admission to anyone with an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card.
- The current authorization level of \$38.6 million, first enacted in 2004, would be over \$50 million if adjusted just for inflation. This does not even consider increases in museum attendance.
- There is high demand for funding from the IMLS Office of Museum Services. It received 755 applications requesting \$115.5 million in 2016, but current funding has allowed the agency to fund only a small fraction of the highly rated grant applications it receives. This does not take into account the fact that many museums do not even apply for grants due to the unlikelihood of being funded.
- To learn more about grants awarded to museums in your state or district, visit: [imls.gov/grants/awarded-grants](https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded-grants)

Additional Information About Museums

- Museums support jobs and the economy. They spend \$21 billion annually, employ more than 400,000 Americans and spur tourism from around the world.
- Museums are an essential part of the nation's educational infrastructure, tailoring educational programs and materials to state and local curricula, spending more than \$2 billion a year on education, and promoting lifelong learning.
- Children who visited a museum during kindergarten had higher achievement scores in reading, mathematics and science in third grade than children who did not. This benefit is also seen in the subgroup of children who are most at risk for deficits and delays in achievement.
- Museums are beloved community anchors, attracting over a million volunteer hours every week.
- Museums are part of a robust arts and cultural production sector, which the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis has measured at \$704 billion annually—4.2 percent of the nation's economy.
- Many museums have developed innovative programs to meet the growing needs of their individual communities. For example, many have programs designed specifically for children with special needs and their families, some work with medical schools to teach observation and description skills, and some are helping veterans heal from their wounds—both physical and psychological.

Status

S. 3391 expired at the end of the 114th Congress. At press time, it had not yet been reintroduced in 2017.