



Public Diplomacy and Protection of Cultural Property

Request

- Provide at least \$110 million in FY 2017 funding for cultural exchanges, such as the Museums Connect program, through the Office of Citizen Exchanges within the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.
- Enact H.R. 1493, the Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act.

Museums Connect

The U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs fosters cross-cultural understanding and collaboration, and demonstrates shared values and aspirations across cultures. The Museums Connect program brings U.S. museums together with museums in other countries to tackle important community issues, like civic participation, discrimination, gender issues and science education. Participants play a crucial role in educating their communities, connecting people with information and ideas and building long-lasting relationships across borders.

In one project, the AAM-accredited National Constitution Center in Philadelphia and the National Museum of Afghanistan partnered on "We the People: Afghanistan, America, & the Minority Imprint," where high-school students working with the two museums scoured the streets, their classrooms and their homes with cameras to interpret concepts such as dissent, freedom and democracy in their countries. Since 2007, Museums Connect has supported projects at institutions spanning 27 states and 49 countries in every region of the world, reaching over 250,000 people.

Museums Connect Talking Points

- The importance of building a citizenry capable of engaging across national borders cannot be understated. Given museums' role as welcoming and trusted community anchors, they are perfectly positioned to build these cross-cultural relationships, which are enhanced by collections that span the world across centuries.
- Exhibitions and informal educational opportunities—both here and abroad—increase cross-cultural competency for everyone involved. U.S. citizens learn about the culture and traditions of peoples throughout the world. Citizens of other countries learn about the U.S. through face-to-face engagement, as opposed to the images and stories that are portrayed through the media.
- The Pew Research Center's 2002 study *What the World Thinks* acknowledged that visits to another country and familiarity with its citizens increase outsiders' favorable opinions of that nation. From the report: "Most of the respondents to this survey have not visited the United States. But an analysis of results from 21 of the nations surveyed shows that those who have traveled to the United States, or are in regular communication with Americans, have a more favorable opinion of the U.S. compared with those who have had no comparable exposure. This is even true in countries where many hold an unfavorable view of the U.S."



- You can learn more about the projects funded by Museums Connect at aam-us.org/resources/international/museumsconnect/projects

Status

- The State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is funded through the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs appropriations bill.

Office of Citizen Exchanges Funding History

	FY 11	FY 12	FY 13	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17 President's Request
Appropriation <i>(in millions)</i>	\$95.4	\$99.4	\$96	\$101	\$100	\$102	\$105.2

Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act

The Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act, as passed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, would institute import restrictions on Syrian cultural property, while allowing limited waiver of these restrictions for purposes of safe-keeping by a cultural or educational institution. Additionally, the bill calls on the president to establish an interagency coordinating committee on international cultural property.

Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act Talking Points

- In recent years, irreplaceable cultural property has been lost in places like Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Mali and Afghanistan. Better international coordination and monitoring is necessary to prevent more of these treasures from being lost forever.
- Illicit trafficking of cultural property is a source of funding for terrorist and organized criminal organizations around the world.
- Protecting international cultural property is a vital part of United States diplomacy, showing the respect of the United States for other cultures and the common heritage of humanity.
- The world's cultural property tells a profound story about our shared past. Protecting that property from illegal activity and making it legally available is imperative so stories of the past may be broadly shared across borders.
- American museums and the conservation professionals who work with them are some of the world's best at protecting and caring for cultural property. The limited waiver provisions in this legislation would allow U.S. museums to be part of the solution to a truly deplorable problem.

Status

- H.R. 1493, the Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act, was passed by the House of Representatives on June 1, 2015. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved a slightly amended version on February 2, 2016.