

## **Contact Congress to Support The Federal Formula Grants for Museums**

Here is your chance to become a part of the national effort to secure Federal funds for museums and become an active participant in this exciting process. The Federal Formula Grants Coalition is pursuing a new initiative to secure federal formula grants for museums during the reauthorization of the Institute of Museums and Library Services in 2009 and needs your help. The Coalition would like you to contact your members of Congress and ask them to support federal formula grants for museums. It's important for ALL members of Congress to know about the initiative. However, if your Congressperson is on one of the committees responsible for working on IMLS reauthorization, your support is imperative. The more they hear from museum professionals, the more likely they are going to take this initiative seriously.

Act now and let our elected representatives in the United States House and United States Senate know it is essential for them to play a leadership role and establish federal formula grants for museums. The Coalition is asking for your help to encourage members of Congress to support Federal formula grants for museums – the sooner that members of Congress make a commitment to support the initiative, the more likely that the Coalition will be able to secure more federal funding for museums.

Members of Congress will want to know how much money we are seeking for America's museums. Although the Coalition is working to identify an exact amount, the answer for now is "parity with libraries." In terms of 2007 dollars, IMLS's library program was appropriated \$210.5 million, while the museum side was appropriated at \$36.5 million. Of the \$210.5 million for libraries, \$163 million was for federal formula grants. Although the Coalition has not yet committed to a dollar amount that will be requested in the legislation, it's important to emphasize the goal of parity with libraries.

If you are worried about lobbying, know that telling your members of Congress they need to support more money for museums is not lobbying, it's advocacy. Lobbying will begin when legislation is introduced to Congress and you are asked to support that specific bill.

### **How can you help? Write to Your Members of Congress**

Write to your members of Congress about this important issue! For your convenience, we have provided a sample letter on the AMM Web site at <[www.midwestmuseums.org](http://www.midwestmuseums.org)> – feel free to download and personalize the letter for your correspondence (you might also want to include a copy of the one-page Case for Support statement that is also available on the AMM Web site). Print the letter on your own stationery and **FAX** the letter into the Congressperson's Washington office (mailing to Congressional offices takes over 3 weeks to reach your Congressperson due to the irradiation process it goes through upon arriving

at the U.S. Capitol). Keep a copy of your letter and share it with the Coalition's lobbying firm, Washington Strategies, so they can track contacts with Congress.

Washington Strategies

Phone: 703/351-5030

Fax: 703/312-7139

E-mail: [mikel@washingtonstrategies.com](mailto:mikel@washingtonstrategies.com)

### **Talk to Your Members of Congress**

Your Senators and Representative are often at home for holiday "recess." This is a perfect opportunity for you to meet with them, by appointment or at a community event. Perhaps you will attend a town meeting or a function where one or more of your Congressional delegation is in attendance. If so, mention how important it is for Congress to establish federal formula grants for museums when they reauthorize the Institute for Museum and Library Services Act (IMLS) in 2009. Call their local offices at least two weeks in advance and make an appointment to visit, or make an appointment for just a longer phone conversation. To help you prepare for your conversations, the Coalition recommends that you review the case statement and sample letter to Congress. Be sure to provide this information ahead of your meeting so they are familiar with the request. Ask your Congressperson how s/he feels about this issue and report back to the Coalition's lobbying firm, Washington Strategies, so they can track responses from members of Congress!

Remember that advocacy is not just about federal formula grants, it's about making your members of Congress aware of your museum's contributions to the community. This is the perfect opportunity to do both!

### **How to Find Your Members of Congress**

When you visit the Senate or House Web site, insert your zip code to look up the proper address and fax number for your Senators and U.S. Representative. For the names and contact information of your Senators visit <[www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)>. For the names and contact information of your Representative, go to <[www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)>.