

# THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION'S PRIORITIES

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## HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION'S PRIORITIES

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TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2017

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 11:38 a.m., in Room 1310, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Gregg Harper [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Harper, Davis, Comstock, Smith, Brady, and Raskin.

Staff Present: Sean Moran, Staff Director; Kim Betz, Senior Advisor; Mary Sue Englund, Director of Administration & Operations; Cole Felder, Deputy General Counsel; Erin McCracken, Communications Director; C. Maggie Moore, Legislative Clerk; Rob Taggart, Deputy Legislative Clerk/Oversight; Mary Sue Englund, Director of Administration & Operations; Jamie Fleet, Minority Staff Director; Matt Pinkus, Minority Senior Policy Advisor; Khalil Abboud, Minority Chief Counsel; and Eddie Flaherty, Minority Chief Clerk.

The CHAIRMAN. I now call to order the Committee on House Administration for today's hearing examining the Smithsonian Institution and its priorities. The hearing record will remain open for 5 legislative days so members may submit any materials they wish to be included. A quorum is present, so we may proceed.

In 1846, Congress created the Smithsonian Institution at the behest of Englishman James Smithson. A scientist by trade, Mr. Smithson willed his estate to the United States to found at Washington under the names of the Smithsonian Institution an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge.

Today, the Smithsonian Institution encompasses 19 museums, 9 research centers, and the National Zoo. The Smithsonian Institution plays a critical role in collecting and preserving our Nation's history and culture. The Smithsonian Institution also works with entities around the world to advance critical scientific discovery and research.

For the past 20 months, Secretary David Skorton has led the Institution. The Committee looks forward to discussing the new strategic plan, which is currently being drafted with Secretary Skorton, that will guide the Smithsonian Institution over the next decade. We expect to hear from Secretary Skorton on the challenges the Smithsonian Institution faces, particularly in an environment in which Federal funding is uncertain, at best.

These challenges include such things as balancing new strategic initiatives with available funding; broadening public access to its collections both in person and digitally; operating a new museum, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and revitalizing one of the most visited museums in the world, the National Air and Space Museum; preserving priceless collections for scientific research to tell the American story; and—not glamorous but very important—prioritizing facility maintenance and revitalization needs.

I particularly want to focus on this last challenge. It is our hope to address the realities faced by the Smithsonian Institution today. By realities, I am talking about the growing list of deferred maintenance projects, the rising costs associated with maintaining and operating museums and facilities, and protecting collections for their future use. These realities must be a pillar of the upcoming strategic plan, and this Committee looks forward to seeing the strategic plan upon its completion.

So I thank Secretary Skorton for his appearance before the Committee today. And I would like to now recognize the Ranking Member of the Committee, Mr. Brady, for the purpose of providing an opening statement.

Mr. Brady.

Mr. BRADY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for calling this hearing.

Everyone loves the Smithsonian, so I appreciate the opportunity to hear from our witness about what is happening there and how we can be helpful.

Of course, I emphasize my number one concern about the Smithsonian: that access to our museums and many of our exhibits remain free. That has always been my priority.

I want to acknowledge the Smithsonian presence in my district. The African American Museum in Philadelphia and the National Museum of American Jewish History are Smithsonian affiliates, and they are proud of that, and I am honored to represent those great institutions. Also, since 2012, the Smithsonian has had 40 fellows, 59 interns, and 31 research associates from my district. So I am well represented there. I am proud of the work my constituents are doing to advance the cause of the Smithsonian.

I look forward to hearing from you, Mr. Secretary.

And I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

Does any other Member wish to be recognized for the purpose of an opening statement?

Seeing none, I would like to now introduce our witness. Dr. David Skorton is the 13th Secretary of the Smithsonian. He assumed his position in July, on July 1, 2015. As Secretary, Dr. Skorton oversees the entire Institution and its entities. Dr. Skorton is the first physician to lead the Smithsonian. He is a board certified cardiologist and previously was the president of Cornell University.

Again, we thank the Secretary for joining us today. And the Committee has received your written testimony. And the chair now recognizes Secretary Skorton for 5 minutes.

Dr. Skorton.

**STATEMENT OF DR. DAVID J. SKORTON, SECRETARY,  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION**

Dr. SKORTON. Thank you, Chairman Harper and Ranking Member Brady and all the Members of the Committee, for the opportunity and the honor of testifying today.

My colleagues and I greatly appreciate the continuing support of the Congress and your confidence in our work to understand, preserve, and tell the story of America, and to inspire new generations to dream the American Dream.

Your investment in the Smithsonian is an investment in the civic, educational, scientific, and artistic life of our Nation. The Smithsonian is the world's largest museum, education, and research complex, and through our museums, the National Zoo, the research centers, and education initiatives, we seek every day to help all of us, as Americans, understand each other, ourselves, and our role in the world, in part through the arts and humanities.

We use increasingly cutting-edge technology to create unprecedented access to our treasures, and we seek to inspire educators, students, and learners of all ages.

Last year was exceptional for the Institution, culminating with the opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. This beautiful and thought-provoking museum has been a huge success with the public. We have hosted more than a million visitors since the end of September.

The year 2017 will be a time of transition for our Institution as we implement, as the Chairman mentioned, a new strategic plan. Building on the tremendous momentum of the previous strategic plan, we are working closely with the Strategic Planning Committee to incorporate input from across the Smithsonian before presenting the plan to our Board of Regents, to the Office of Management and Budget, and to the Congress.

A strong strategic plan will allow the Institution to focus even more effectively on our key priorities: improving how we pursue our core mission; better leveraging partnerships with American and international organizations; communicating more effectively; cultivating our generous donors and supporters; and identifying and advancing special specific initiatives.

In the months and years ahead, we seek to increase our positive impact as we convene important conversations, continue our important work in science and history, while sharpening our focus on the arts, promoting diversity leadership, enhancing our global reach, establishing a culture of national thought leadership, greatly increasing digital access, and refocusing expenditures on maintaining and revitalizing existing facilities.

Many important issues have a national and global impact, and the Smithsonian is bringing people together to discuss solutions. Our research centers do important work to understand the correlation between healthy ecosystems and our own well-being, a concept termed by the Center for Disease Control as One Health, helping

us to address emerging threats from pandemic disease to species decline.

Research and scholarship at the Smithsonian are anchored by our national collections. Today, I brought some personal favorites, especially Sandy Koufax's baseball mitt, which would have been a favorite of my late dad, who was a big fan of his. It is our obligation in the public interest to hold these national treasures and preserve them for future generations.

One way that we preserve and expand access to our collections is by digitizing them. To date, we have digitized more than 29 million items from the 154 million items in the collection, with many available to download in people's homes, in labs, and in classrooms, and in this way we seek to serve the many, many Americans who cannot visit our museums on The Mall or in New York City.

Our Collections Space Framework Plan guides our long-term decisions about the collections from our facilities to the way we care for the collections. Facilities maintenance will be a major focus in the coming years as we continue to address our large deferred maintenance and repair needs. Reducing this backlog, I believe, gives the best value to the American taxpayer, since inadequately funded maintenance can lead to costlier capital improvements down the road.

One such project that the Chairman mentioned is the National Air and Space Museum revitalization. As you know, the building systems have greatly exceeded their useful lives. They are over-taxed by the over 7 million annual visitors to the museum, which is nearly four times more than they were designed for. The building's exterior stone cladding is failing and needs to be replaced.

The Air and Space Museum project 35 percent design estimates are \$676 million, but as it evolves, every effort is being made to contain these project costs. Although this is an enormous expense, we believe the project is absolutely essential and hope to begin construction in fiscal year 2018.

We will leverage this Federal investment by raising an additional quarter of a billion dollars in private support to totally revamp the 23 galleries throughout the facility. The result will be an exciting new experience, in essence, a new National Air and Space Museum.

While the Smithsonian is nationally important, our reach is also global. We work around the world to protect and preserve cultural heritage and to do groundbreaking scientific research.

In 2017, we aim to finalize an agreement with the renowned Victoria & Albert Museum to create a first international museum exhibition presence in London, which does not involve a capital project.

Though our creative staff continues to have impressive success, we do face significant challenges. We need to provide adequate staffing, including security, at the new National Museum of African American History and Culture. We need to fill more curatorial positions throughout the Institution and enhance security across our most visited sites.

As we look ahead to fiscal 2018, the Institution is prepared for any budget contingencies. We have recently appointed a group of 10 unit directors to serve as a budget review panel to look at poten-

tial scenarios and to make recommendations to ensure the most efficient use of precious Federal resources.

Given our budgetary constraints and a growing maintenance backlog and facility renovation, we must use capital resources wisely and efficiently. We are fully committed to better telling the story of all Americans. However, despite the worthy recommendations for new museums to be added to the Smithsonian, we currently lack the capacity and resources to bring new museums to fruition.

Again, I am honored to be a part of this great Institution. The Smithsonian is a valuable resource that I believe has proven its worth for 171 years as a steward of our past and investment in our future. I am confident that with the continued support of Congress and the administration, we can be even more relevant and a unifying presence in an increasingly diverse and vibrant America.

Thank you for the chance of interacting with you today, and I look forward to any and all questions. Thank you.

[The statement of Dr. Skorton follows:]

**Statement of Dr. David J. Skorton, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution  
"The Smithsonian Institution's Priorities"  
Committee on House Administration, U.S. House of Representatives  
March 28, 2017**

Thank you Chairman Harper, Ranking Member Brady, and all Members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. It is a privilege to serve as the 13th Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. My colleagues and I appreciate the continued generous support of the Congress and your confidence in us and in our mission to understand, preserve, and tell the story of America and to inspire new generations to innovate and to aspire to the American Dream. Your investment in the Smithsonian is an investment in advancing the civic, educational, scientific, and artistic life of our nation.

It has been my pleasure to work with this Committee since arriving at the Smithsonian. It was a particular honor for the Institution to host the newly elected Members of the 115th Congress at the National Museum of African American History and Culture and for me to speak directly with them in Williamsburg as part of the orientation the committee provides its newest colleagues. It speaks volumes about the importance this Committee places on the role of art, history, science, education, and culture in public service.

As a public trust, the Smithsonian addresses some of the world's most complex issues and uses constantly evolving technologies to broaden access to information for all Americans.

Thanks to the bequest of English scientist James Smithson, Congress established the Smithsonian Institution in 1846 as an independent federal trust instrumentality, a unique public-private partnership that has achieved outstanding results for 171 years. The federal commitment provides the foundation for all we do and is critically important in attracting private support. We leverage our federal funding to enrich the lives of the American people and advance our mission: "the increase and diffusion of knowledge."

We are a world leader in research and discovery addressing today's relevant issues, and the Institution helps the American people understand each other, themselves, and their role in the world through the arts and humanities. We use cutting-edge technology to create unprecedented access to our treasures and inspire educators, students, and learners of all ages.

The Smithsonian is large and diverse, encompassing art, history, science, education, and culture. We have 19 museums, 21 libraries, nine research centers, the National Zoo,

and 216 Affiliates in 46 states, Puerto Rico, and Panama. Our collections now total 156 million objects, including 145 million scientific specimens, 340,000 works of art, and 2 million library volumes. We also care for 156,000 cubic feet of archival material, 16,000 musical instruments, and more than 2,000 live animals. We are open 364 days a year. We have research and education facilities in eight states and the District of Columbia, and conduct research and other activities in more than 145 countries. For the last full fiscal year, our museums had more than 29 million visits and another 4.5 million people visited our traveling exhibitions. In addition, the magazines *Smithsonian* and *Air and Space* have a combined readership of more than 8 million people. The Smithsonian Channel is distributed by eight of the top nine cable TV operators and is available in 38 million households.

The year 2016 was exceptional for the Institution.

Our visitors were treated to more than 100 new exhibitions throughout all of our museums and the National Zoo.

Thanks to the work of our Digitization Program Office, we are now leaders in the field of 3D scanning, allowing our treasures and specimens to be seen in an entirely new light.

Our innovative work in genomics will make the Smithsonian a world leader in searching for answers to genome-scale questions about the animals, plants, and ecosystems of our planet.

We continued to produce educational materials ranging from supplementary resources for all grade levels to science curricula for K–8. More than 2,300 of these are tied to national standards and available online for free. Our STEM-centered, inquiry-based curricula are used in school districts in all 50 states and 25 countries.

Smithsonian scientists also work around the globe to help save endangered, vulnerable, and threatened species.

We collaborated with international partners to preserve the heritage of cultures in war zones and fought outbreaks of pandemic disease.

We explored the universe's boundless mysteries, from carbon planets capable of supporting life in its earliest existence to a planet currently forming in an Earth-like orbit around a young star.

The highlight of the year was the opening of our newest museum, the National Museum of African American History and Culture. After 30 years of legislative effort and a decade to turn a beautiful dream into a stunning reality, the museum has already hosted more than a million visitors and has shown us how powerful it can be to tell the nation's

story through one people's journey.

The year 2017 will be a time of transition at the Institution. We will continue to be guided during the next few months by our current Strategic Plan that focuses on five "Grand Challenges" that promote interdisciplinary and Institution-wide collaboration. Accordingly, we are improving facilities maintenance and collections care to be better stewards of America's treasures. We also continue to seek out new federal, state, and local partners to expand our reach.

In September 2016, the Chair of the Board of Regents, John McCarter, and I announced the formation of a committee to prepare the next strategic plan for the Smithsonian Institution. The effort is being led by the Strategic Planning Committee Co-Chairs, Regent Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson and Dr. Kirk Johnson, the Sant Director of the National Museum of Natural History. Since September, the Strategic Planning Committee has been analyzing data and developing a working draft of the new plan.

I will be working with the leaders of this effort to incorporate input from stakeholders across the Smithsonian before presenting the plan to the full Board of Regents, the White House, and the Congress.

The process of developing a new strategic plan involved reviewing the successes and challenges associated with our current plan while soliciting feedback and new ideas. The Institution is examining what it is doing well and what it can do better; assessing local, national, and global aspirations; considering strategies to improve the impact of museums and other education programs; and seeking new ways to position the Institution as a catalyst for meaningful conversations on issues affecting the nation and world.

A strong strategic plan will allow the Institution to focus even more effectively on key priorities that support everything we do such as improving the ways we pursue our core mission; better leveraging partnerships with U.S. and international cultural, scientific, and educational organizations in both the public and private sectors; communicating more effectively with our numerous constituencies; cultivating our donors and supporters; and identifying and advancing special initiatives.

As the Strategic Planning Committee continues its work, I am developing central themes that will complement the direction set by the Board of Regents in the next strategic plan.

The Institution will place a greater emphasis on convening critical conversations on topics of vital public interest, incorporating a creative and energetic focus on the arts throughout the Institution, promoting diversity leadership to increase inclusion in our

own museums and those throughout the country, emphasizing our global reach in programming and science, establishing thought leadership by more widely disseminating our scholarly findings and convening conversations, embedding the Smithsonian vision established by the new strategic plan into all of our operations, increasing digital access to our collections and research for the public, and refocusing capital expenditures on crucial maintenance and revitalization of existing facilities rather than the building of new museums.

Many Americans remain divided on social, intellectual, and scientific matters. At the same time, many have also lost trust in traditional American institutions, from government to religious organizations to the media. This dearth of trust has led to a lack of confidence in the information the citizenry needs to form educated opinions and make critical decisions.

How do we move beyond a mood of skepticism about the validity of information toward a future in which information is generally trusted? Where and how do we find venues where we can and will respectfully discuss, disagree, and debate, talking with each other instead of at each other?

More and more, the trustworthiness of information is derived from the perceived authority of its source. Since the nation's founding, people have consistently placed trust in museums and libraries. Even today, libraries and museums are considered honest purveyors of information and places for conversation about issues of local and national significance.

In many cities and rural areas across the United States, cultural institutions strengthen our communities through the arts, history, culture, and science. As the world's largest cultural, educational, and research institution, the Smithsonian must set an example by leading and participating in meaningful dialogue about the important issues facing our nation.

The ability to play this role depends on continuing to earn the trust of our leaders and the public. Cultural institutions cannot be seen as partisan or political. Our role is not to advocate or judge. Instead, cultural institutions aim to provide context and information—and often the forum—to knowledgeably and constructively address important issues.

To that end, on Earth Day 2017, the Smithsonian will convene the first Earth Optimism Summit, a three-day event featuring more than 150 scientists, thought leaders, philanthropists, conservationists, and civic leaders from across the political spectrum. Organized by the Smithsonian Conservation Commons, a team of conservation experts from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, National

Zoological Park, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, and the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, Earth Optimism will explore solutions to global conservation efforts and provide a platform to discuss ways to apply findings and replicate successes.

While our museums and the Zoo provide the stage for dialogue, the dedicated work of Smithsonian scholars and scientists behind the scenes gives us the expertise and credibility to convene meaningful conversations.

We conduct cutting-edge research in nine research centers based in Massachusetts, New York, Washington, D.C., Virginia, Maryland, Florida, Arizona, and Panama. Our scientists, curators, and scholars conduct research in approximately 145 countries worldwide. These talented and committed people are national treasures as valuable to the Smithsonian as our vast historical collections.

The Smithsonian must be a place people feel comfortable learning new things, even when it challenges deeply held beliefs. We are here to serve the public, and that means from our Regents to our scientists to our curators, we check our politics at the door and continue to advance science as we have always done—by following where the data leads.

Science at the Smithsonian is anchored by our national collections. We have the Star-Spangled Banner; Morse's telegraph; Edison's light bulb; the Hope Diamond; the Wright Flyer; one of Amelia Earhart's planes; Louis Armstrong's trumpet; labor leader Cesar Chavez's jacket; the Lansdowne portrait of George Washington; the Congressional Gold Medal awarded to Japanese American World War II veterans; the *Spirit of Tuskegee* airplane; the camera John Glenn used on his voyage into space; a wide array of Asian, African, and American art; the Apollo 11 command module *Columbia*; the space shuttle *Discovery*; and a personal favorite that my father would have loved, Sandy Koufax's baseball mitt. We hold all these priceless national treasures in trust for the American people and preserve them for future generations to enjoy.

Digitization is a critical component of collections stewardship that strengthens inventory control through electronic record-keeping, enhances research, and increases access to audiences worldwide while prolonging the life of collection items by minimizing contact with objects. To date, we have digitized more than 29 million items, with many available to download in labs, in homes, and in classrooms.

In fiscal year (FY) 2016, the Digitization Program Office initiated an ambitious four-year project to digitize the entire collections of eight history, art, and culture collecting units through its Mass Digitization Program, working in close collaboration with the National Collections Program. When completed, we will have the ability to share these

collections more broadly, achieving new forms of outreach and impact. The Digitization Program Office continues to plan for the digitization of other collections, including participating with the National Museum of Natural History in a national effort to digitize fossils and working with the National Museum of American History to digitize its collection of 18,000 posters related to World War I and World War II.

Our Mass Digitization Program continues to increase the amount of digitized collections we can make available to the public. Through FY 2015–2016, this program has digitized more than 1 million Smithsonian collection items.

The 3D Digitization Program continues to extend the boundaries of what is possible in the 3D realm. We can now digitally experience sitting in the Apollo 11 command module, print replicas of historic remains recovered from the Jamestown settlement, and bring replicas of historic and scientific objects directly into classrooms throughout the country.

Of course it is not enough to digitize our objects; we must also preserve and protect them for future generations. In 2015, the Smithsonian completed a multiyear Institution-wide collections space planning initiative culminating in our Collections Space Framework Plan. The plan includes recommendations and a 30-year implementation to address current and Institution-wide collections space requirements in a strategic, integrated, and collaborative manner. The framework plan identified 34 percent of collections space as optimal, 19 percent as acceptable, and 47 percent as unacceptable based on Smithsonian-developed collections space standards. Of the collections space deemed unacceptable, 33 percent is at our Paul E. Garber Preservation, Restoration, and Storage Facility, which contains approximately 30 separate artifact storage buildings.

The plan now serves as a road map to guide short- and long-term facilities capital, real estate, and collections-care project decisions, providing renovation and new construction strategies that address the unacceptable collections-space conditions, allow for decompression of overcrowded collections to make them more physically accessible, anticipate future collections growth, and reduce or eliminate reliance on leased space for collections storage.

The Smithsonian has made significant strides in improving collections care through major facilities capital revitalization and construction projects. Past projects include construction of the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center which significantly increased the storage capacity for and public access to the collections of the National Air and Space Museum (NASM). Renovations at the National Museum of Natural History improved collections and laboratory space for invertebrate and paleobiology collections. The construction of Pod 5 at the Museum Support Center (MSC) allowed us to safely

preserve and make accessible scientific specimens stored in alcohol and formalin. Renovations to the existing MSC Pod 3 provided collections space for three Smithsonian art museums as well as physical anthropology and other collections requiring specialized environments such as Antarctic meteorites and frozen tissue samples. The recent renovation and reopening of the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum also resulted in a number of improved collections processing, conservation, and storage spaces.

To address near-term space requirements, the implementation of the Collections Space Framework Plan called for hazardous material mitigation and removal of collections from failing facilities at our Garber Facility. This high-priority project is now approximately 50 percent complete and has already improved the condition of more than 20,000 square feet in collections space.

Near-term projects that will advance the Collections Space Framework Plan include the construction of an additional storage pod at MSC and the construction of two new storage modules adjacent to the Udvar-Hazy Center, which would reduce the unacceptable space by another 14 percent, or approximately 126,000 square feet. The first of the Udvar-Hazy Center modules will be critical as it will also serve as temporary collections swing space when the NASM Mall building revitalization effort begins. Once completed, the space will then serve to relocate at-risk collections from the Garber Facility, further reducing the amount of unacceptable collections space.

With important collections spread across our museums and research centers, the maintenance of our facilities will be a focus for the Institution in the coming years. As you are aware, the Institution has a large backlog of maintenance and repairs that had to be put off to a future time, officially deemed Deferred Maintenance and Repairs. Currently, the Deferred Maintenance and Repairs estimate for Smithsonian facilities stands at approximately \$898 million.

To address the backlog, our maintenance program establishes five-year plans with proposed investment levels intended to prevent further deferred maintenance while reducing it over time in coordination with our capital program. To do this, the National Research Council recommends an annual maintenance budget in the range of 2 to 4 percent of a physical plant's aggregate current replacement value. The Smithsonian's FY 2016 maintenance budget represents 1 percent of that value. To make best use of the funding available, the Institution uses a reliability-centered maintenance philosophy. By employing smart technologies that monitor conditions, we strive to perform the appropriate maintenance at the right time.

Reducing this backlog is critical to ensuring the long-term success of the Institution and providing the best value to the American taxpayer. Reducing the backlog

will help preserve the useful life of a building and can prevent the need make costlier capital improvements and renovations in the years ahead.

One such renovation of which this Committee is keenly aware is the NASM Revitalization Project. As discussed in a previous hearing at this Committee, we had long planned to replace NASM's building systems, which are 40 years old and have exceeded their useful lives. These systems were originally designed for two million annual visitors. The NASM Mall building has approximately 7 million visitors annually—nearly four times the projected amount. In fact, it is consistently the most visited museum in the United States. The new systems simply must accommodate the true number of visitors while maintaining proper environmental conditions for collections.

When we studied the building more extensively, we determined that the stone originally used on the exterior was cut too thin. The cladding is failing and must be replaced, and the stone has become too fragile to be reused. This makes the project significantly more complex and more expensive.

As you are aware, the 35 percent design estimates for the NASM project came in at \$676 million. As the design process for the project evolves, every effort is being made to contain the costs. The museum will leverage this federal investment by raising an additional \$250 million in private support to totally revamp the 23 galleries throughout the facility. The result will be an exciting new experience for our visitors and a building that will host millions of visitors well into the future.

A particular challenge to this project is the need to store and protect the museum's collection during construction. For FY 2017, we requested funding to build the first storage module of a "Dulles Collections Center" on the site of our Udvar-Hazy Center at an estimated cost of \$50 million. As previously mentioned, at the conclusion of the NASM Revitalization Project, we will use this storage module to house artifacts currently stored at aging buildings that were intended to be used temporarily at the Garber Facility. Removal of old, inadequate facilities is essential to implementing our Collections Space Framework Plan.

Previous Smithsonian revitalization projects have generally been funded by a mix of federal and private funding, with federal funding focusing on structures and systems and private funding focusing on exhibit areas. In the case of the NASM Revitalization Project, the Smithsonian is planning to raise private funds for the redesign of all exhibit areas and exhibit fabrication. It is estimated that a total of \$250 million will need to be privately raised from individuals, foundations, and corporations to transform our 23 exhibits in the National Mall building. The Smithsonian will use the building revitalization as an opportunity to modernize the way NASM interacts with visitors.

The current renovation plan sequences the construction from west to east along the museum's seven zones, thereby allowing at least 50 percent of the museum to remain open at all times so that we can provide access to the millions of visitors who come to this inspiring museum.

While we recognize that renovating the museum will be an enormous expense, we believe it is essential. As we sit here today in the shadow of the newly restored Capitol Dome, it is clear that the buildings on the National Mall are more than just brick and mortar. They are an essential part of our public infrastructure, a legacy for future generations, and a testament to the greatness of our nation.

While the Smithsonian is nationally important, its reach is global. Every day, we work with partners around the world to protect and preserve cultural heritage, fight pandemic disease, and save species from extinction. The Institution has had an international presence since its founding, but to date has never brought our experience and expertise in exhibits and education to other shores. Soon, that may change. Our participation in the development of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in East London continues to progress. In June, we announced our intention to enter into a groundbreaking collaboration with the world-renowned Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) through its future development, V&A East. The Boards of both the V&A and the Smithsonian authorized their respective leaders to sign a non-binding Letter of Intent to outline the plan and process of this collaboration; we hope this agreement will be finalized in 2017. The primary activity will be a combined exhibition space to be jointly curated by Smithsonian and V&A staff members, along with temporary space for Smithsonian exhibitions. It is anticipated that the new building will open in 2022, helping expand the Smithsonian's scope to new audiences without drawing from federal resources.

As we look toward FY 2018, I have convened a group of ten directors from units throughout the Institution to serve as a budget review panel. They will look holistically at potential budget scenarios and make recommendations to ensure the most efficient use of our precious federal resources.

Despite budget constraints, we need to continually improve our work to more completely and effectively tell the story of America and all Americans. Given the challenges of these budgetary constraints and significant needs to renovate our current facilities, it is essential that we ensure our capital resources are fully utilized for maintaining and revitalizing existing facilities, not constructing new museums.

Currently, there are recommendations by the National Museum of the American Latino Commission and the American Museum of Women's History Congressional Commission to establish new museums under the Smithsonian. Concurrently, there is a

new effort to establish such a commission for the study of a National Museum of Asian Pacific American History and Culture. These efforts are admirable.

Given our current demands, however, we do not have the capacity or resources to bring the dreams of new museums to fruition. As such, we must commit to telling the story of all Americans more completely with the resources already at our disposal. We will continue to support programming from the Smithsonian's Latino and Asian Pacific Centers and explore the diversity of our past at the National Museum of American History. We also plan in the near future to establish a Women's History Initiative at the Institution as we strive to tell the story of all Americans.

We are only able to accomplish all that we do thanks to more than 6,500 dedicated employees—award-winning scientists and scholars, curators, researchers, historians, and experts in fields from astrophysics to zoology—and more than 6,300 generous on-site volunteers, more than 800 research fellows, more than 900 research associates, nearly 1,800 interns, and more than 7,200 digital volunteers. Our people leverage their intellect and talent to benefit the Smithsonian and the world many times over. Their level of commitment makes it unsurprising that the Smithsonian was, for the sixth year in a row, ranked as one of the best places to work in the federal government.

With the continuing support of the Congress, the Administration, our Board of Regents, and the American people, we will offer more opportunities to enlighten and engage the public in the future.

I am forever honored to be a part of this great Institution that serves our nation and the world. Today, with its free museums, distinguished research and scholars, iconic American treasures, and vast array of information accessible from its websites, the Smithsonian is a resource of extraordinary value for the American people and the world. I believe the Smithsonian has proven its worth as an investment in the future as well as a steward of our past. We face a future that holds both exciting opportunities and imposing challenges. I am confident that with the continued support of the Congress and the Administration, the Smithsonian will be an even more important, relevant, and unifying presence in an increasingly diverse and vibrant America.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Secretary Skorton, for your testimony.

We will now move to our questions portion, and I will begin by recognizing myself for 5 minutes.

There are so many treasures, and of course you have brought just a small collection here but of pretty priceless baseball objects. But these treasures are throughout the system.

And one of my favorites is in the Air and Space Museum, which is our plane from Mississippi, the Key Brothers airplane, the old Curtiss Robin monoplane, where in 1935 the Key Brothers set the flight endurance record at 27 days without landing, and that is still the record for that. And so your plane hangs in the Smithsonian when that happens. So it is something that is a real treasure to us to see that.

But I wanted to talk to you about some of these issues, particularly where we are on how we are going to move forward and do the things that are necessary. What do you see as the biggest risk facing the Smithsonian today or in the future, and how do you intend at the Smithsonian to manage that risk?

Dr. SKORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We really have two categories of risks to the Smithsonian. One is the risk of our inability to keep up with the maintenance and revitalization backlog. We maintain approximately 12 million square feet of space. Last year, we had over 20 million individual visitors to our museums. And in some cases, like the National Air and Space Museum, we continue to have multiples of the number of visitors that my predecessors thought might actually come, almost four times the number right now that were initially suggested.

So that is just one of many examples. And as I mentioned in the testimony, it is very important to realize that inadequate funding and attention to maintenance and backlog and revitalization needs will eventually lead to costlier capital projects. So that is one whole category.

The other category, besides the physical capital, is the human capital, and it is very important that we pay attention to our curatorial ranks, to the science ranks. Like all organizations in our country, we are graying, and the aging workforce at the Smithsonian means that we have to be ready to hire a renewed workforce as people get to retirement.

And so we are planning very carefully our use of resources so that we can increase the curatorial ranks, some hopefully by Federal funding, some through philanthropy, and in the meantime work on these capital issues.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. How will the national campaign, how will the funds raised from the national campaign support the operations and maintenance of facilities?

Dr. SKORTON. So the national campaign, which has been very, very successful because of the huge generosity of the American public, corporations, and individuals, we have raised over \$1.6 billion in the campaign so far. The campaign continues through the end of this calendar year.

The funds are used for a wide variety of uses, but to specifically answer your question about facilities, they are used for upgrades and renovations largely to interior spaces.

And so one example that those of us in Washington know about is the renovation of the Renwick Gallery, and this allowed us to do things in that space that we were unable to do and led to a tremendous, tremendous increase in visitorship to that. And there are other examples, but that is one that I think shows the possibility of philanthropy helping us.

It is difficult to raise philanthropy for the sort of changes that need to be done to the National Air and Space Museum, I want to hasten to add however, because, for example, replacing now defective stone cladding on the outside, in my experience fundraising of approximately 25 years, I have found it hard to get philanthropists interested in that sort of project, whereas interior things we can.

And to restate it, our goal is to raise a quarter of a billion dollars to redo every single one of the 23 galleries within the museum.

The CHAIRMAN. It is obviously a goal of, I think, all of us, and I know you, to make sure that admission to the Smithsonian remains free of charge so that groups, school groups and others, can come up and not have an expense to come in. So what populations of visitors, who can we get to come in? How can we expand what is there to open this up even further?

Dr. SKORTON. First of all, I want to thank you for bringing the point up and thank the Ranking Member, too, for bringing up the point about free entry. I am absolutely committed, as is the entire Smithsonian family, to maintaining free access to these museums. It is critical, the museums were set up in the public interest, and we want to be there for all Americans.

Having said that, our best efforts to get people to come to The Mall and to our facilities in New York City are always going to fall short of the number of Americans who could attend. So we are trying in other ways to reach out to America where it lives.

One approach is through digitization of the collections to the extent that we can do that, and that allows us to allow people in their own living room, so to speak, to look at individual parts of the collection and learn more about all the things that we are studying.

The second, as you have mentioned very kindly, is our 216 affiliate museums around the country, and we have affiliate museums in all the States represented on this Committee.

A third is our Traveling Exhibition Service, which allows us to bring parts of our collection to Main Street USA. And then we have other ideas through the use of social media and other new technologies to reach out to America.

So we want to make sure that people feel welcome at The Mall and welcome in other parts of the city where we have facilities here and in New York City, but we also want to reach out beyond. And to summarize again at the end, we are absolutely committed to maintaining free admission.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you so much, Secretary Skorton.

I will now recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Brady, for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. BRADY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think I heard your last statement, you are going to keep it free, right?

Dr. SKORTON. Yes.

Mr. BRADY. Free admission. Thank you. I appreciate that.

What more can we do to expand the Smithsonian Affiliates Program? I have two, as I mentioned in my earlier statement, in my district, and I think it is a good way to bring the power of the Smithsonian to other parts, other districts throughout the United States. It is good to feel and hand touch and see, and that instead of coming to Washington, I think you can get a glimpse and maybe hopefully come to Washington and visit the main campus, so to speak.

Dr. SKORTON. I am hungry to continue to grow our Affiliates Program. It has grown very substantially under the leadership of my predecessor, Wayne Clough, and through the leadership of our acting provost, who is right here, Richard Kurin, and it has grown substantially even in the 2 years or so that I have been here.

So if you have any ideas, Congressman, please send them directly to me, and we will continue to look into it. In the meantime, we are also making sure that we have this robust Traveling Exhibition Service so that we can go out to areas around the country. And I am committed to both of those being very robust.

Mr. BRADY. Good. Thank you. And also, I want to commend you for your wisdom in maintaining and keeping Mr. Greg Abbott behind you there. Greg is formerly from my staff, and I know he is a great addition and does a great job. And we talked all the time when we had our hearings for 2 or 3 days that it is hard to keep good staff. It is hard to keep them when you have got to pay them. And so I am sure he wouldn't mind a raise, sir.

I got to give you a plug, Greg, got to give you a plug.

Dr. SKORTON. You know, I have been told by our HR office to just not answer questions about Mr. Abbott's salary.

Mr. BRADY. Well, I will make a private conversation someday.

Dr. SKORTON. I am at your service, sir.

Mr. BRADY. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back my time.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

I now recognize Mrs. Comstock for 5 minutes.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I thank the witness today. It is delightful to be with you.

I think I was in third grade when I first came to the Smithsonian. My mom is a teacher, and so we dutifully went through all of the highlights of the museum at that age. And she did the same with my three children. And now she is a docent at the Smithsonian, and so she is very good at now bringing the great-grandchildren around.

And I am fortunate to have the Udvar-Hazy Center museum in my district, and so my 2-year-old granddaughter and I and my husband were out there a few weeks ago. And I loved the little picture set-up you have where you can have a little space suit photo shopped on to you, and she was very excited. She got her ride in the spaceship, on the space shuttle, and then she got that picture.

So that is in her room, and she is thrilled. So when she is an astronaut somewhere down the road heading to Mars, we can thank you for all the good efforts that you make there.

So I did want to ask about the Udvar-Hazy, as some of the renovations are going on, and the planes and all, and the storage facilities. How is that progressing at this time?

Dr. SKORTON. Thank you for your kindness. And I just want to mention, we want to invite you and your granddaughter to come to the National Museum of American History where the Wegmans Corporation has developed something we call Wonderplace, and it is aimed at children ages zero to 6, zero to 6. So we are very interested in early child——

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Wonderplace?

Dr. SKORTON. It is called Wonderplace in the National Museum of American History. And we are glad to work with your staff. If you want to come, we are actually more interested in having your grandchild, but you could also come along.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. I will get good grandma, nana points.

Dr. SKORTON. But thank you very much for bringing up the issue of storage space relevant to the National Air and Space Museum.

If I may take just a moment, Chairman, I would like to just remind people the strategy that we want to use in revitalizing the National Air and Space Museum. We have two basic axioms that we want to follow in doing the revitalization. One is that we want to end up giving the United States of America a new National Air and Space Museum at the least possible cost, even though obviously it is a tremendous cost. And secondly, we want to keep the museum open to the American public. So our plan is to do it in phases and always to keep at least half of the museum open.

In order to do that, we have to put some of the precious artifacts in there somewhere else. And so we have asked for—it is going to be one of our top requests coming up—for an additional storage facility, as Representative Comstock mentioned, in your district, in the Udvar-Hazy area.

That will serve two purposes. The first purpose is that it will allow us to efficiently move along with the plans for the revitalization. And then when that revitalization is complete, we will use that new storage facility to give us a big jump-start on replacing some inadequate and nonoptimal storage that we have throughout our system because the growth in our collection has been done at such a breakneck pace.

So that is the reason that that is a very high priority for us, and we hope for Congress' support in that request.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Thank you. And I did have one—first of all, I also want to thank you for digitizing the collection because I do see, as schools are—particularly in my area, since I am here locally—they are cutting back on field trips. They are not getting down and using the museums as much as they might. And I am always surprised at even on weekends people not getting down and using this, you know, coming. I guess maybe parking is always a challenge, and if Metro is not working right and all of that. We have Metro in my region, so as it expands, hopefully we will get folks back in here. But I really appreciate the digitizing of it because I think that can bring it to life and hopefully spur that interest.

But on another, very different front, because I noticed that some of the people who are leaving in some of the senior positions at the museum, how do you plan for that transition and finding those key people? Because obviously these are very unique and important jobs to have the understanding of how to run a museum and to really have that skill set with these unique jobs. Where do you find the folks, what is the transition process, and how can we help with making that as smooth as possible?

Dr. SKORTON. Thank you very much for recognizing our other big challenge besides facilities, and that is the human capital, as we put it. And thank you also for being sensitive to realize that the skill set needed to work at this kind of creative organization, if not unique, is at least very unusual.

I have found two things since being at the Smithsonian that have been hugely, hugely gratifying on this front. First is an immense feeling of pride and I would even say joy in the workforce of the Smithsonian. We tend year after year after year to rank high in agencies of our size in terms of employee satisfaction; always trying to do better. And I think part of that is that they are very proud of the positive things that we can do for America through education, through research, and through the, as our founder called it, the diffusion that is the museums themselves.

The second thing I have found is that when openings come up we are inundated with people who want to come, people from the inside of the Institution that want to move up the ladder, people from outside the Institution that want to become part of something that is attempting to do a positive.

And if I might just say, in a time where museums and libraries are still respected and considered honest purveyors of information, I think people more and more would like to be a part of contributing to such a thing.

So it is true, as you very insightfully noticed, that we have a lot of turnover happening in the Institution right now. A lot of it is because of people having served there a very long time.

And just last night, in fact, Dr. Kurin and I were at a recognition party for our wonderful director of the National Museum of African Art, Dr. Johnnetta Cole, who likes to say that she just celebrated her 40th birthday times two.

And we are just in the process of beginning to look into that situation. So it is a challenge. The good news is that people seem to be very, very interested in being part of the Smithsonian, and I believe that will continue in the future. Thank you for asking about that.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. I can tell you, my mom, being a docent, the joy that she sees in the place and being able to continue to work with children. Actually my daughter, the mom of the aforementioned little granddaughter who is 2 years old, I was telling my daughter where she should buy her house based on the lovely children who came down. She kept saying there in the area where they bought their house what a nice group of children there were that she was taking through.

But the employees really do bring joy to those children, and it is a delightful place to volunteer and work. So thank you for creating that spirit.

Dr. SKORTON. Mr. Chairman, if I just might insert very quickly.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, sir.

Dr. SKORTON. Thank you also for reminding me to recognize our volunteers. We have about 6,500 paid employees. We have about the same number of in-person volunteers, as you mention, and we have about the same number of digital volunteers who help us with things from a distance. Without the volunteers, we would not be able to open the doors in the morning. So thank you very much, Representative Comstock, for reminding me.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlelady yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska, Mr. Smith, for 5 minutes for questioning.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Dr. Skorton. I appreciate your service.

Deferred maintenance and backlogs and so forth, what would you say is the long-term plan to address this? And I see where there was a requested increase in facilities capital appropriations for fiscal year 2017. Can you speak to that?

Dr. SKORTON. Yes. Thank you very much, and thank you for your attention today.

Deferred maintenance is a big issue and has been a big issue in every nonprofit I have worked for over the years, so it is definitely not unique to the Smithsonian.

What is different about the Smithsonian is our public-facing nature, that we have millions of Americans walking in. So we are concerned not only about the beauty of the buildings, but about their functionality, but especially about security and safety for the people who come in.

Industry standards suggest that we should be spending something on the order of 2, maybe 3 percent of the base in maintenance each year, and I am very, very grateful to the huge steady support that Congress has given us. Nonetheless, I must say that the money that has been appropriated has been about half of what projections would be for the future.

So more funding for maintenance, even though it is always hard to come by, is the bedrock of going forward. Once the funding is available, at whatever level, the other bedrock is having a carefully designed plan for prioritizing a dizzying number of things that need to be dealt with.

And our facilities professionals have done, in my experience of 30 years of leading institutions, have done an absolutely world-beating job of prioritizing, based on really two criteria. One criterion, the chief one, is the public's safety and health. And the second one is what future costs could be reduced or prevented even if judicious things were done along the way to do maintenance and revitalization.

And so because it is an interest of mine, Congressman, I have look very carefully in the weeds at how this is done. I am very impressed with what our facilities professionals are doing. And I hope to have more chance to speak to Members of Congress about the importance of saving future costs by doing some preventive maintenance and deferred maintenance in the Institution, and I very much appreciate your question.

Mr. SMITH. Sure. And you utilize a lot of partnerships with the private sector for promotion and exhibits and so forth. Can private sources of funds be used for maintenance? Do they get used for maintenance?

Dr. SKORTON. Private sources can definitely be used for interior changes. An example that I like to give is the Renwick Gallery in town here near the White House where many of the things inside were done through philanthropy, and there are other examples.

In my fundraising experience, and it is a long experience, I have found it hard to interest philanthropists, either corporations or individuals, in helping with things that are falling apart, to just be plain about it. And we try that. I have tried in earlier philanthropic campaigns in other settings to interest donors in that, and I found it a very, very heavy lift to do that.

Mr. SMITH. Hard to put a family name on a new roof?

Dr. SKORTON. It is hard. It is hard. But I would tell you what is a beautiful partnership and a very exciting partnership, and I don't think there is a better exemplar in our country than the Smithsonian, is a partnership between solid Federal funding that makes philanthropists say: You know, if the U.S. Government is interested in keeping this thing at the top, I want to put my part in.

And I like to think that it goes in the opposite direction as well. If I do my job and I bring in very robust philanthropic funding, and that is, trying to lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps, perhaps you will see us as not just showing up with our hand out. So I think both those things go together.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Dr. SKORTON. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Illinois, the Vice Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Davis, for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Mr. Skorton, for being here today. My kids are always advocates of the Smithsonian when they are out here on regular occasions, and it is great to be able to let them roam The Mall and go see some of the great collections that you have.

I have got a question about the Collections Space Framework Plan that identified 47 percent of collection storage space as unacceptable. What is the plan, and how does it address the collections remaining in unacceptable spaces until facilities can be revitalized or constructed to meet acceptable standards?

Dr. SKORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Davis, for your attention to that matter and for focusing us on one of the things that genuinely keeps me up at night.

So we have this national collection of 154 million objects and specimens and things, and that is just the physical. We also have millions and millions and millions of other things in archives and so on. And that will all be for naught if we can't take better care of them, so I appreciate your attention to that.

We really have, again, a multiphased approach through our facilities professionals. One is, in every situation where maintenance is required, we have a careful prioritization. And in answer to Mr. Smith's question, I mentioned that we have this very careful proc-

ess or prioritization based first on public safety and then based on the cost of eventual problems if we don't do it.

In the case of the collections, the prioritization is based on how hard it would be to replace something. Many of these things are absolutely irreplaceable. And then secondly, what the actual risks are in that particular building, in that particular space within the building, in that particular part of the space.

In some cases, the facilities professionals have been able to do relatively modest, inexpensive things, changing the way a cabinet is used or putting new cabinetry in or things of that sort. And in other areas, we have just done our best to move things around and try to put things that are in the most danger in the best space.

But I appreciate your question. And I must say, make no mistake about it, that we need to pay more attention to this. We hope for your support of things like the Udvar-Hazy place, because we have as much to do in high priority projects as we have already done. So we are at about the halfway point on that.

So again, it is prioritization, it is fixes that we can afford right now, and it is planning and working with the Office of Management and Budget and with Congress in general to put only our highest priority needs forward, which we have.

Mr. DAVIS. So you are going to prioritize some of the needs that we need to address in a time when you know our Federal funds are very, very limited. I mean, these are concerns, because what you do and what the Smithsonian staff does on a regular daily basis is amazing. And to be able to have these properties, to be able to have these collections sitting in displays that are acceptable, great. To just the regular visitor, they may not know that some of these exhibits are in unacceptable standards.

But at some point we will gladly ask you to come back, I am sure, at the Chairman's discretion, to talk about how you are working toward making these unacceptable conditions much more acceptable and how that prioritization is working on behalf of the Smithsonian, but in the end, working on behalf of the taxpayers who are the visitors to your Institution.

So one last question. I do have a question about the Garber facility.

Dr. SKORTON. Garber, yes.

Mr. DAVIS. Yeah. At what expense, both time and funds, does relocating collections from the Garber facility have on your operations?

Dr. SKORTON. Can you ask it one more time, sir? I didn't hear it right.

Mr. DAVIS. At what expense, both time and funds, does relocating collections from the Garber facility have on your everyday operations?

Dr. SKORTON. I see. There is no question that relocating items from that facility has a direct effect on the efficiency of our operations. And I apologize, I don't have an exact number to tell you right now linked to that.

But I wonder if this would be acceptable to the Vice Chairman and to the Chairman, if we came back to you very quickly with a more detailed set of information about the general question you asked, as well as the Garber, as well as the relationship between

the request at Udvar-Hazy and what is happening at Garber and that day-to-day operation.

If that would be acceptable, rather than give you an imprecise answer now, I would like to give you a more precise answer, which we can get to you in short order, if that is acceptable.

Mr. DAVIS. Absolutely. Thank you. Thank you for your time.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

I want to tell you again how much we appreciate you being here today, Secretary Skorton. We take our oversight of the Smithsonian as a serious matter, just as you do your job. None of us like surprises, so we will certainly try to keep very open lines of communication. And likewise, we are available. If there is something that we need to know, I know you will reach out to us as you have been doing. And we appreciate the great work that your team is doing.

With that, without objection, all Members will have 5 legislative days to submit to the Chair additional written questions for the witness, which we will forward and ask the witness to respond as promptly as he can so his answers may be made a part of the record.

Without objection, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:16 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION**  
1309 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515-6157  
(202) 225-8281  
<https://cha.house.gov>

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JAMIE FLEET, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

April 18, 2017

Dr. David J. Skorton  
Secretary  
Smithsonian Institution  
P.O. Box 37012 MRC016  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7012

Dear Secretary Skorton:

Thank you for testifying during the Committee on House Administration's March 28, 2017 hearing entitled, "The Smithsonian Institution's Priorities". The Committee requests you respond to additional questions that will be made part of the hearing record. Please provide your responses to the following questions to the Legislative Clerk, Maggie Moore ([Maggie.Moore@mail.house.gov](mailto:Maggie.Moore@mail.house.gov)), with the Committee by **Friday, May 5, 2017 at 10:00am**.

**Questions from the Majority**

**London**

1. The London project, should it move forward, will presumably demand focus and attention from the Institution. Given the challenges facing the Smithsonian, is it the appropriate time to expand activities to London? What are the opportunity costs of the London project? For example, would staff resources devoted to the London project be otherwise devoted to other priorities of the Institution?

**Facilities**

2. What is the Smithsonian's strategy for reducing its deferred maintenance backlog? Does this strategy assume increases in federal funding for maintenance and/or facilities revitalization? If so, how will the Smithsonian adjust this strategy if additional federal funding is not appropriated for these purposes?
3. In response to a March 2016 Inspector General audit on deferred maintenance, the Smithsonian indicated the Office of Facilities would work with the Office of Advancement and Office of Planning, Management and Budget to discuss the feasibility of private funding options to reduce the backlog of deferred maintenance. Have those discussions occurred and, if so, what was the result?
4. The 65% design for the Air and Space Museum revitalization was expected near the end of February. Have you received it and is there any change to the working estimate or scope of the project based on that design?

5. Due to its large scope, will the National Air and Space Museum revitalization “crowd out” other facilities revitalization projects? Please provide the Committee a prioritized list of facilities revitalization projects assuming funding at FY16 level and funding at 90% of that amount.
6. Describe the goals and schedule for the “Consolidated Administrative Headquarters Initiative.” Does the Initiative envision the Smithsonian purchasing additional buildings?

#### New Museum Proposals

7. There have been proposals for several new museums within the Smithsonian, including the Latino American, Asian Pacific American, and Women’s History Museums. What programming and activities does the Smithsonian currently undertake which address these communities?

#### Science/Research

8. The Smithsonian is convening the first “Earth Optimism Summit” with more than 150 scientists and others “from across the political spectrum.” How does the Smithsonian ensure that a full range of viewpoints is represented at this summit and other similar events? For example, what criteria are used to develop the topics for the program and invite participants?
9. Smithsonian scientists produce extensive, world-class research. Does the Smithsonian invest in helping scientists leverage their research in the marketplace, similar to an “Office of Technology Transfer” in an academic setting?

#### Collections Management

10. The Collections Space Framework Plan identified 47% of collections storage space as “unacceptable.” What plans does the Smithsonian have to bring storage facilities to acceptable standards and to ensure that storage facilities remain in acceptable condition? How does the Plan address the collections housed in unacceptable spaces until facilities can be revitalized or constructed to meet acceptable standards? What were the cost implications – resources, time and money – of having to relocate items from the substandard Garber facility as well as bring facilities up to suitable standards?
11. The Smithsonian collecting units have prioritized 15 million items that will need to be digitized. Is there a timeframe for completing these images? Has the Smithsonian been able to realize process improvements in digitizing that result in faster imaging?

#### General

12. The Smithsonian has employed ticket management system for certain high-demand exhibits in the past. Please describe these processes and whether they have been successful in managing the public’s free access to these exhibits.

#### Questions from the Minority


1. Please describe what might occur if the proposed “swing space” at the Udvar Hazy Center is not completed in a timeframe which coincides with the current schedule for revitalization at the Air and Space Museum Building on Independence Avenue. Would the main project be delayed, would the

exhibits on Independence Avenue be moved to a different location other than Udvar Hazy, or are there other possibilities?

2. Please describe the status of any current or prospective plans for the Smithsonian to build or manage additional facilities abroad. What factors caused the Institution to reduce its original ideas for the London project and is that evaluation still current policy?
3. Two commissions authorized by Congress have reported on the possibility of a Smithsonian American Latino Museum and a Smithsonian Women's History Museum. Congress has not yet acted on these recommendations. If land were available on the Mall or in some other potentially appropriate location for a new museum, from a financial and management perspective is there a limit to the number of such facilities the Smithsonian could ultimately undertake and accommodate into its mission? Would any statute authorizing such project(s) require a commitment to a portion of Federal funding in order to be viable?
4. What is the status of current plans for the Arts and Industries Building? Some ideas for potential new museums have envisioned using Arts and Industries as part of their infrastructure. How long should the Smithsonian wait to see if these projects materialize before deciding on a more permanent use for that building?
5. How long do you estimate the current advance ticketing admissions policy at the African American Museum will persist? If attendance holds or increases above present levels, can the current policy be managed indefinitely?

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please feel free to contact the Legislative Clerk, Maggie Moore at (202) 225-8281. Thank you again for your testimony. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Gregg Harper  
Chairman

**Smithsonian Institution**  
**Questions for the Record to the Committee on House Administration**  
**“The Smithsonian Institution’s Priorities”**  
**March 28, 2017**

**Questions from the Majority**

**London**

**1. The London project, should it move forward, will presumably demand focus and attention from the Institution. Given the challenges facing the Smithsonian, is it the appropriate time to expand activities to London? What are the opportunity costs of the London project? For example, would staff resources devoted to the London project be otherwise devoted to other priorities of the Institution?**

We believe that the collaboration with the V&A in London is opportune from a timing perspective and that it fits well with the long-time tradition of the Smithsonian to reach out globally. The approach of using programmatic, rather than capital intensive, strategies to expand our reach will be a core element of our next strategic plan. Bringing the incredible strengths of both the Smithsonian and the V&A together in this way geometrically expands the kinds of programs and topics that can be explored in the new East London venue. Given that the facilities won’t be completed for 5-6 years, it allows a gradual level of effort to be devoted as opposed to an alternative that might be nearer term and require a greater concentration of time and attention. While there are many present challenges facing the Smithsonian, the Institution wants to continue to be strategic and to expand its impact as it has consistently done over its history.

**Facilities**

**2. What is the Smithsonian’s strategy for reducing its deferred maintenance backlog? Does this strategy assume increases in federal funding for maintenance and/or facilities revitalization? If so, how will the Smithsonian adjust this strategy if additional federal funding is not appropriated for these purposes?**

The Institution’s strategy for reducing its deferred maintenance backlog is to spend the money that is appropriated as wisely as possible, and to utilize efficiencies throughout the institution to free up funding to address the backlog. If requested federal funding is not appropriated to address capital revitalization needs and sustain continued reductions in the backlog of deferred maintenance and operations, collections care and public access will be compromised. We have had some success in raising private funds to enhance revitalization projects, particularly with renovations where naming opportunities exist for gallery or exhibition spaces; however, equipment and building systems replacement due to end-of-life and failure does not attract donor interest. If federal funding is not available to keep pace with adequate stewardship obligations, strategies to reduce the financial burden could include greatly limiting access to collections, research, education, and the public and even closing facilities.

**3. In response to a March 2016 Inspector General audit on deferred maintenance, the Smithsonian indicated the Office of Facilities would work with the Office of Advancement**

**and Office of Planning, Management and Budget to discuss the feasibility of private funding options to reduce the backlog of deferred maintenance. Have those discussions occurred and, if so, what was the result?**

As previously mentioned, some success has been achieved in raising private funds to enhance revitalization projects in our federal capital plan, particularly in renovations where naming opportunities exist for gallery or exhibition spaces. However, equipment and building systems replacement due to end-of-life and failure does not attract donor interest. Federal money can however help leverage private funding. The Cooper-Hewitt and Renwick Gallery projects are two such examples of federal and private funding combining to improve both the infrastructure and exhibit space. In both those cases, the assurance that federal funding would be committed toward major revitalization and system replacement was the incentive needed to bring in the needed donor funding to complete the associated programming and exhibit portion of the project. We do have a long record of augmenting federal infrastructure funding in collaboration with donor programming. This has totaled more than \$640 million since 2005. In each case, the federal infrastructure funds were used to revitalize facilities and cut the overall deferred maintenance backlog in the areas renovated.

**4. The 65% design for the Air and Space Museum revitalization was expected near the end of February. Have you received it and is there any change to the working estimate or scope of the project based on that design?**

The National Air and Space Museum Revitalization design achieved the 65% design development milestone in February as planned. Independent cost assessments from both our design consultants and our Construction Manager (CMc) have been received and reconciled with input from the Smithsonian cost engineers. With the CMc on board, we have for the first time received cost input from the marketplace, which was higher than anticipated. We are currently working through scope re-validation on a discipline-by-discipline (trade-by-trade) basis in order to bring the project estimates back within our budget goals. This is a typical process and is well managed and coordinated with appropriate oversight by Institutional decision-makers. We anticipate some scope changes and individual line item estimates to change as the design progresses with input from the CMc. Nonetheless, we believe the needed scope and cost adjustments are manageable within our project budget goal of \$650M.

**5. Due to its large scope, will the National Air and Space Museum revitalization “crowd out” other facilities revitalization projects? Please provide the Committee a prioritized list of facilities revitalization projects assuming funding at FY16 level and funding at 90% of that amount.**

We don't expect the NASM project to have much impact on other revitalization projects in FY 2017 as we will still be in the preparation stages, e.g., pursuing collection storage to hold NASM artifacts. In FY18, we will continue to prioritize the projects and sequence their execution based on programmatic and facility urgencies. The table below illustrates one approach for a reduction in our FY17 plan.

<b>FY 2017 Facilities Capital Program (\$000s)</b>	<b>FY16 Funding Level</b>	<b>90% Below FY16</b>
National Museum of Natural History	19,100	10,680
National Zoological Park	26,000	21,400
National Museum of American History	5,000	5,000
National Air and Space Museum	3,000	3,000
National Museum of the American Indian	2,050	2,050
Anacostia Museum	0	0
Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum	2,700	2,700
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden	1,000	0
Museum Support Center	2,250	2,250
Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory	1,750	1,750
Smithsonian Environmental Research Center	0	0
Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute	1,400	1,400
Suitland Collections Facility	2,000	2,000
Multiple Locations Revitalization Projects	13,000	13,000
Facilities Planning and Design	24,948	24,548
Construction: Collections Storage Module	40,000	40,000
<b>Total Facilities Capital Program</b>	<b>144,198</b>	<b>129,778</b>

**6. Describe the goals and schedule for the “Consolidated Administrative Headquarters Initiative.” Does the Initiative envision the Smithsonian purchasing additional buildings?**

The Smithsonian currently occupies a significant amount of administrative office space dispersed in several buildings located in Washington DC and Northern Virginia. The current aggregate occupancy cost for these leased spaces exceeds \$26 million per annum and is projected to grow to more than \$35 million per annum by 2021. For the past several years, the Smithsonian has systematically aligned the lease termination dates in order to pursue an effective consolidation strategy into approximately 500,000 square feet of space. We feel this strategy, depending on the options pursued (lease or buy) could potentially save the Smithsonian Institution \$200-\$300 million over a 30 year period. Therefore, yes, purchase of a building is one of the options being pursued.

After discussions over several years with GSA, we have been unable to identify suitable properties within its portfolio to meet our needs. Therefore, in 2014 we initiated a request for proposal to identify for lease and/or purchase approximately 500,000 square feet of suitable space to achieve this consolidation. We have now reached the point of being able to begin

negotiations. We have also formed a joint working group to identify/resolve project implementation issues, coordinate and seek support from OMB and Congressional staff, and to develop a schedule of critical milestones necessary to complete all activities in the near future. The next few months will be key to this initiative of making the Smithsonian stronger financially and more efficient with a consolidated location for most administrative support.

#### **New Museum Proposals**

**7. There have been proposals for several new museums within the Smithsonian, including the Latino American, Asian Pacific American, and Women's History Museums. What programming and activities does the Smithsonian currently undertake which address these communities?**

Across the Smithsonian, we have made great efforts to include items in exhibitions that reflect the accomplishments and achievements of all of these communities and are redoubling our efforts to tell the full story of America. All of the museums have devoted exhibitions to themes that feature these communities along with ancillary public programs and educational materials. The Smithsonian annually organizes Latino and Asian American heritage months and women's history month. The Smithsonian Latino Center and the Asian Pacific American Center are units with staff, budgets and boards that organize Smithsonian and traveling exhibitions, websites, public and educational programs featuring those two communities. They also help allot pool funds across the Smithsonian to encourage scholarly and educational activities in the various museums and research centers. The Smithsonian is currently developing a more enhanced women's history initiative.

#### **Science**

**8. The Smithsonian is convening the first "Earth Optimism Summit" with more than 150 scientists and others "from across the political spectrum." How does the Smithsonian ensure that a full range of viewpoints is represented at this summit and other similar events? For example, what criteria are used to develop the topics for the program and invite participants?**

The Earth Optimism Summit was designed to share successes in conservation across a wide variety of topics and approaches, particularly those that represent benefits both for biodiversity and human wellbeing. Featured topics ranged from small-scale efforts to large-scale initiatives, implemented by non-profit groups, businesses, local governments, and nations. The Summit showcased the Smithsonian's commitment to convening meaningful conversation, which meant considering any approach to conservation that produced positive outcomes.

We began this process by reaching out to a wide variety of potential partners in the science, conservation, government and business communities. We sought examples of conservation success, particularly examples where people also benefited through jobs, food security, and health. There was no shortage of success stories to share, and we tried to include the largest variety possible within the time constraints of the event and speaker availability.

By casting a wide net and focusing on outcomes over ideology, the result was a summit that featured a broad spectrum of ideas and viewpoints. We featured not only the traditional conservation approaches, but also examples of businesses and NGOs looking for environmental solutions that help decrease costs and mitigate risk, and local governments who embraced green energy primarily for fiscal reasons.

As the Smithsonian continues to convene conversations in the future on relevant issues, we will continue to do so with the knowledge that discourse is more meaningful when many voices are heard.

**9. Smithsonian scientists produce extensive, world-class research. Does the Smithsonian invest in helping scientists leverage their research in the marketplace, similar to an “Office of Technology Transfer” in an academic setting?**

Smithsonian science tends to be federally funded and subject to certain limitations that may not be applicable in a university or academic setting. Additionally, our scientists typically conduct basic research, not applied research. As a result, our scientific work generally does not have immediate commercial or marketplace potential. Based on those factors, the return on investment for creating an office of technology transfer is unclear.

There are some facets of Smithsonian research, such as our work in the Tropics that may have marketplace value. We do explore such opportunities on a case by case basis with our researchers and sponsors, and support potentially marketable proposals where we can.

## **Collections Management**

**10. The Collections Space Framework Plan identified 47% of collections storage space as “unacceptable.” What plans does the Smithsonian have to bring storage facilities to acceptable standards and to ensure that storage facilities remain in acceptable condition? How does the Plan address the collections housed in unacceptable spaces until facilities can be revitalized or constructed to meet acceptable standards? What were the cost implications – resources, time and money – of having to relocate items from the substandard Garber facility as well as bring facilities up to suitable standards?**

The Collections Space Framework Plan includes recommendations and a 30-year implementation plan for addressing current and projected collections space requirements in a strategic, integrated, and collaborative manner. The Plan would enable the Smithsonian to renovate nearly 700,000 square feet of existing unacceptable space and add 1 million square feet of new space to relieve overcrowded collections space conditions, replace space that cannot be improved through renovation, and address future collections space needs.

To address near-term space requirements, we continue hazardous material mitigation and relocation of collections from contaminated conditions in Garber Buildings 15, 16, and 18 into a temporary swing space. We recently completed the decontamination, cleaning, and relocation of

over 4,600 collection items belonging to American History and Postal Museum, previously stored in hazardous conditions in Garber Building 15. We also continue to support the assessment, inventory, conservation, rehousing, and move of Air and Space objects from substandard conditions at the Garber Facility to the Udvar-Hazy Center.

In addition, we have invested in new storage equipment across the Institution to replace substandard equipment, which is the most effective and efficient way to minimize physical and security risks to collections, improve collections accessibility, and correct unacceptable collections space conditions where equipment is the only deficiency factor placing collections at risk. In 2016, the Smithsonian launched the Preparedness and Response in Collections Emergencies (PRICE) initiative to strengthen Smithsonian collections emergency preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery capabilities.

Near-term projects include the construction of an additional storage pod at Museum Support Center and the construction of two new storage modules adjacent to the Hazy Center. The first of the modules will be critical as temporary collections swing space during the upcoming NASM Mall Building revitalization, and will then serve to relocate at-risk collections from the Garber Facility, further reducing the amount of unacceptable collections space. The addition of these facilities will reduce the unacceptable space by an additional 14%.

Long-term, the Collections Space Framework Plan supports a phased development of the Suitland and Dulles campuses. Each of these strategies will reduce, consolidate, and ultimately eliminate our need for temporary and leased collections space while also improving the environmental and security conditions for our collections.

The costs associated with relocating items from the Garber Facility are incorporated into the larger Collections Space Framework Plan. The estimated cost for moving collections, demolition of buildings, and construction of new suitable collections space at the Suitland Collections Center, the majority of which is located at Garber, is projected at approximately \$575 million. To help control these costs, the Smithsonian is partnering with other agencies, such as the National Gallery of Art, to consolidate collection storage space requirements and ensure collections care standards are maintained.

**11. The Smithsonian collecting units have prioritized 15 million items that will need to be digitized. Is there a timeframe for completing these images? Has the Smithsonian been able to realize process improvements in digitizing that result in faster imaging?**

Through our Mass Digitization Program, the Smithsonian has strategically invested in creating a standardized mass digitization process that enables replicable, cost-effective, high throughput, and high-quality digitization for all Smithsonian priority collections. Implementing this process has resulted in digital images for almost 800,000 collection objects in 2016 alone, which is double the rate of digitization at the Smithsonian from the previous year. Moreover, this process has reduced the costs of digitization by 22% over 2015 projected figures.

Key collections digitized using our mass digitization process include:

- The entire Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum collection of over 190,000 objects.
- Over 271,000 objects in the numismatics collection at the National Museum of American History
- Nearly 700,000 botanical specimens from the National Museum of Natural History
- Over 22,000 postal objects from the National Postal Museum
- Approximately 4500 aircraft instruments and related objects from the National Air and Space Museum
- Over 4000 glass plate negatives from the Smithsonian Gardens collection
- Approximately 3500 objects that comprise the inaugural exhibit of the new National Museum of African American History and Culture

In addition, the Smithsonian's Digitization Program Office has begun an ambitious four-year project to digitize the entire collections of the Institution's eight art and culture museums through its Mass Digitization Program. These museums include:

The Anacostia Museum  
 The Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden  
 The National Museum of African American Art  
 The National Museum of African American History and Culture  
 The National Portrait Gallery  
 The Smithsonian American Art Museum  
 The Smithsonian Gardens  
 The Smithsonian Institution Castle Collection

When completed in FY 2020, these eight museums will be able to share their entire collections more broadly, achieving new forms of outreach and impact. In total, we have so far digitized nearly 29M objects and specimens.

#### **Timed Passes**

**12. The Smithsonian has employed ticket management system for certain high-demand exhibits in the past. Please describe these processes and whether they have been successful in managing the public's free access to these exhibits.**

The decision to employ a free timed pass system can be made for a variety of reasons with the goal of delivering a safe and enjoyable visitor experience. When considering the use of timed passes, each museum must consider visitor demand, physical space, fire and safety codes, and care for objects and artifacts.

In our current three-month exhibit *Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors* at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden we instituted free timed-passes due to the popularity of the artist and the nature of the exhibition, which features six immersive spaces designed to hold only a few people at a time.

At the National Museum of African American History and Culture, we expected extremely high visitation at the opening, and decided to use free timed-passes. Since then we have learned that visitors have an average dwell time of 4.5 hours on weekdays and 6 hours on the weekends and holidays. This is significantly longer than our other museums, and has reaffirmed the decision to use passes.

We continually monitor the timed-pass system, and make adjustments when possible to maximize the number of visitors.

Timed passes have worked very well in the instances where we have decided to use them. It has allowed us to maintain a flow of visitors with free entry to high demand exhibits while avoiding long lines outdoors. While there is frustration from those unable to secure a pass, it is an inevitable problem when visitor demand exceeds our capacity.

#### **Questions from the Minority**

**1. Please describe what might occur if the proposed “swing space” at the Udvar Hazy Center is not completed in a timeframe which coincides with the current schedule for revitalization at the Air and Space Museum Building on Independence Avenue. Would the main project be delayed, would the exhibits on Independence Avenue be moved to a different location other than Udvar Hazy, or are there other possibilities?**

The critical path for revitalization of the museum is completely dependent on the completion of the Dulles Collections Storage Module 1. There are no other swing space options of the size and volume required to house artifacts in a collections quality environment (temperature/humidity/security requirements). Delay in completing the Module will delay the museum revitalization project.

**2. Please describe the status of any current or prospective plans for the Smithsonian to build or manage additional facilities abroad. What factors caused the Institution to reduce its original ideas for the London project and is that evaluation still current policy?**

The Smithsonian was originally presented with an idea to participate in the East London project within a building that would be its own. After much analysis and consideration, it was decided that this approach was too facility intensive. We then refocused our attention on the primary attraction of this opportunity—expansion of programmatic reach to new, international audiences. The decision to partner with the V&A enabled us to develop a strategy that will achieve the goal of greater reach without the additional risks of overseeing a new building and then operating it. We’ve concluded through this process that this model of collaboration is a better way of

achieving growth while we address the significant issues of our existing capital footprint in the US.

**3. Two commissions authorized by Congress have reported on the possibility of a Smithsonian American Latino Museum and a Smithsonian Women's History Museum. Congress has not yet acted on these recommendations. If land were available on the Mall or in some other potentially appropriate location for a new museum, from a financial and management perspective is there a limit to the number of such facilities the Smithsonian could ultimately undertake and accommodate into its mission? Would any statute authorizing such project(s) require a commitment to a portion of Federal funding in order to be viable?**

The Smithsonian is committed to continuing our efforts to more completely and effectively tell the stories of Latinos in America and those relevant to women's history in our country. The Smithsonian would require a statute authorizing any new national museum and has long contended that any plan for such a museum would not be viable within a flat federal budget. Currently the most compelling Smithsonian capital need is for major federal funding for the renovation of the National Air and Space Museum. There are several other large, high-priority projects that also will need to be completed in the fairly near future (e.g., renovation of the Smithsonian Castle).

We are currently continuing our successful Latino Initiative and we are developing a more enhanced Women's History Initiative.

**4. What is the status of current plans for the Arts and Industries Building? *Some ideas for potential new museums have envisioned using Arts and Industries as part of their infrastructure. How long should the Smithsonian wait to see if these projects materialize before deciding on a more permanent use for that building?***

The Arts and Industries Building (AIB) closed for daily public use in 2004 due to deteriorating conditions. Federal capital funding was secured to renovate and stabilize the building envelope, including replacement of the roof and all of the windows in the building. However, the significant additional funding necessary to complete an interior renovation has not been a top priority of the Institution given the construction of the NMAAHC and the urgent need to renovate museums such as the Air and Space Museum.

In the meantime, we are developing interim programming for the space that would bring the building on line and open to the public with a modest amount of investment in the facility itself. Such an interim use would be envisioned to span 5 to 7 years but would need to be assessed against Smithsonian priorities.

Secretary Skorton hired Rachel Goslins this past August as the AIB Director. Ms. Goslins is leading the effort to develop a program for the space, to determine additional work necessary in the facility to support the contemplated activities, to develop a business plan for content creation

and building operations, and to assist in fundraising. She has been assisted by a design firm in the initial program planning.

Two discrete content offerings are contemplated. They are:

1. A space centered about principles of innovation and creativity, designed to inspire and empower visitors to discover the innovator inside themselves. Offerings would be highly interactive, with revolving content focusing on new and future innovations, and would employ a variety of new technologies and delivery approaches that would offer an opportunity to try new approaches to connecting with the public that would benefit the entire Smithsonian.
2. A gallery that would house content focused on the Latino American experience, with a small gallery, educational uses and exhibits, which is being developed by the Smithsonian's Latino Center.

As mentioned in written testimony, at this time it is essential that we ensure our capital resources are fully utilized for maintaining and revitalizing existing facilities, not developing new museums. The current plans for programming fit the Smithsonian's needs for the foreseeable future.

**5. How long do you estimate the current advance ticketing admissions policy at the African American Museum will persist? If attendance holds or increases above present levels, can the current policy be managed indefinitely?**

The National Museum of African American History and Culture welcomed more than 1.5 million visitors since opening on September 24, 2016. With an average dwell time of 4.5 hours on weekdays and 6 hours on the weekends and holidays, the museum utilized Advance Timed Passes combined with Same Day Online and Walk up Passes, to efficiently and safely manage lines and crowds that would otherwise have formed without some form of staggered entry. With the increased visibility of the museum, excellent reviews by visitors, overwhelming demand by groups and the spring and summer season, Advance Timed Passes will be in use for the foreseeable future with modifications as needed.