

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2025

The Honorable Nicole L. Angarella
Inspector General
Smithsonian Institution
P.O. Box 37012 MRC 524
Washington, D.C. 20013-7012

Dear Inspector General Angarella,

On March 27, 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order 14253, which would infringe on the independence of the Smithsonian Institution to carry out its core mission to provide Americans and the world with the tools and information we need to forge our shared future. The funding cuts and content directives will undoubtedly have a devastating impact on the preservation and integrity of American history and culture.¹ Therefore, we write to request an Inspector General investigation into the implementation of EO 14253.

The Smithsonian Institution was created by Congress in 1846 with a clear mandate to operate as a non-partisan and autonomous establishment, free from political influence.² For nearly 200 years, the Smithsonian held steadfast on this mission and established a renowned reputation as the world's largest museum, education, and research complex. In 2024, the Smithsonian Institution reported 16.8 million visitors to its 21 museums, 21 libraries, 14 education and research centers, and the National Zoo.³ Its influence on history and culture extends beyond the boundaries of Washington, D.C., enriching lives nationwide through over 200 Affiliate organizations in nearly every state. These partnerships expand the Smithsonian's collections, educational programs, and exhibitions directly into local communities, making world-class resources accessible to the general public, regardless of background.⁴ Through these broad-reaching and community-driven initiatives, the Smithsonian Institution strengthens its standing as the envy of cultural institutions around the globe.

The Trump Administration's executive order specifically directs the Smithsonian Institution to remove exhibits and narratives it considers 'divisive' or 'race-centered',⁵ politicizing the Smithsonian's foundational purpose and eroding public trust. Conditioning funding on adherence to prescribed, right-wing ideology jeopardizes the Smithsonian's legal compliance oversight and its capacity to document American history and culture accurately. Both the National Museum of African American History and Culture Act⁶ and the National Museum of the American Latino Act⁷ were enacted with strong bipartisan support, reflecting a shared commitment across party lines to explore, document, and interpret the central role of race and cultural identity in American history. It is both ironic and self-defeating to demand that the Smithsonian Institution adhere to content mandates banning race, as doing so undermines the very rationale for the creation of these museums.

Funding cuts and content mandates would have a significant trickle-down effect on local museums and cultural organizations across the United States. The Smithsonian Institution serves not only as a global leader in

¹ *Executive Order No. 14253, Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History*, The White House (March 12, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/restoring-truth-and-sanity-to-american-history/>.

² *Smithsonian Organic Act of 1846*, 9 Stat. 102 (1846).

³ *Visitor Stats*, The Smithsonian Institutions (2024), <https://www.si.edu/newsdesk/about/stats>.

⁴ *About Us*, Smithsonian Affiliations (2022), <https://affiliations.si.edu/about/>.

⁵ Exec. Order No. 14253 §§ 1-2.

⁶ Pub. L. 108-184.

⁷ Pub. L. No. 116-260.

museum practice, research, and education but also as a model and resource hub for institutions nationwide. Significant cuts to the Smithsonian Institution's budget would diminish its ability to provide guidance, professional development, and travel exhibits to smaller museums. Coupled with the recent proposed cuts to the Institute of Museum and Library Services,⁸ the loss of support would further threaten the sustainability of local museums and libraries, eroding the cultural and educational lifelines that fortify American society.

Pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, we respectfully request that your office investigate the impact of implementing Executive Order 14253 on the Smithsonian Institution's non-partisan mission and operational integrity as a beacon of history and culture.⁹ We urge you to fully utilize your oversight authority to "promote the efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity of Smithsonian's programs and operations" by providing a thorough report detailing how the Smithsonian Institution will accomplish its mission following the directives outlined in the executive order.¹⁰

The content of the report should include the following:

- 1) An audit of the operational and financial implications of the proposed content mandate and funding cuts, including the consequences on the Smithsonian Affiliates;
- 2) An audit of the expected impact on existing contractual obligations;
- 3) An analysis of EO 14253's compliance with statutory requirements established by Congress;
- 4) Any documentation of deaccessioned artifacts following EO 14253 and plan to prevent the destruction or sale of cultural and historical artifacts; and
- 5) A recommendation for the Smithsonian Board of Regents on how to adhere to statutory law and the institutions' public trust responsibilities.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Our shared responsibility is to ensure that the Smithsonian remains a source of inspiration and learning for all, free from undue political interference. We stand ready to partner with you to safeguard the integrity of the Smithsonian Institution.

Sincerely,



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

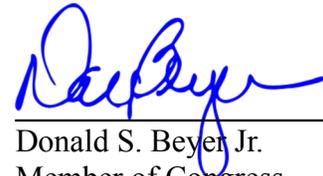
⁸ *Entire staff at federal agency that funds libraries and museums put on leave*, NPR (March 31, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/31/nx-s1-5334415/doge-institute-of-museum-and-library-services>.

⁹ *Inspector General Act of 1978*, 5 U.S.C. App. § 2 (1999) (establishing purpose and duties of the Offices of Inspector General).

¹⁰ *Office of the Inspector General*, The Smithsonian Institution, <https://oig.si.edu/about/office-inspector-general>.



Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress



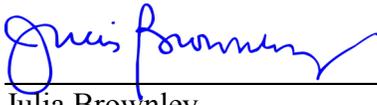
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Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



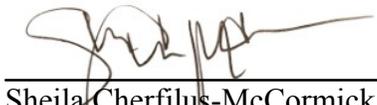
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Member of Congress



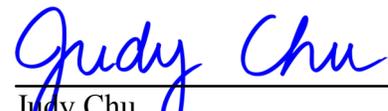
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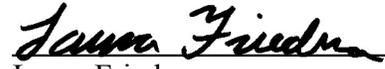
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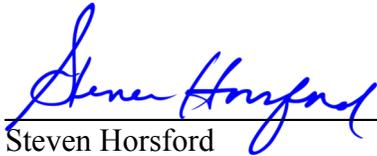
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Member of Congress



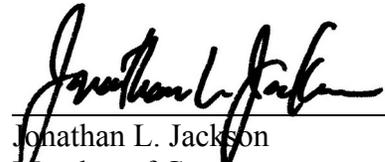
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Nevada's Fourth Congressional
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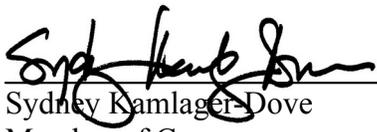
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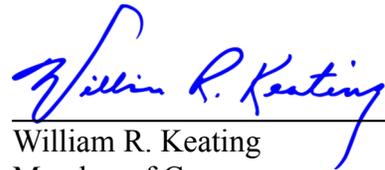
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Member of Congress



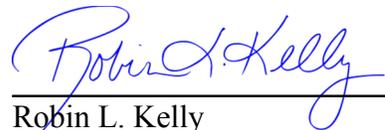
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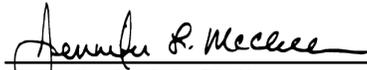
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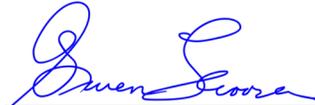
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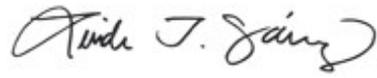
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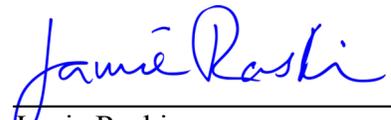
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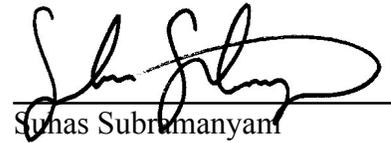
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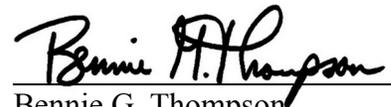
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Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



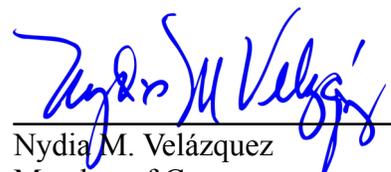
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