

1979

National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities: S. 1386 (1979): Speech 05

Crawford Lincoln

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TESTIMONY OF CRAWFORD LINCOLN, PRESIDENT
OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE, STURBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ARTS & THE HUMANITIES
SENATOR CLAIBORNE PELL, CHAIRMAN
WASHINGTON, D. C.
JUNE 28, 1979

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

As you consider the future level of appropriations for the Institute of Museum Services I would share with you some thoughts about the timely and basic assistance it now provides to scores of museums across America and how its work can be strengthened as we look to the future.

It is clear that the intent of the legislation you introduced is being met. You anticipated the growing national need among museums for general operating support. In the past few years the pronounced effects of inflation have coincided with the increased popularity of museums, whose visitors bring with them rising expectations for more and better programs, exhibitions and activities. Your pivotal role in establishing the IMS acknowledged constructively the basic management needs of museums which, responsibly pursued, can produce more efficient use of available resources and more vigorous programs to serve wider audiences.

From my perspective as chief executive officer of the largest living history museum in the densely-populated Northeast, and as a member of the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, I can state that the Institute of Museum Services is successfully fulfilling its initial mandate. Grant awards, particularly

for general operating support, to qualified museums of all sizes and types-- including smaller institutions where even a few thousand dollars constitute a significant portion of the operating budget--are wisely being put to use to meet critical demands of the day.

Let me illustrate. In my own institution, located in a rural community of about 5,000 people, with IMS general operating support assistance on a matching basis we have been able to put in place a solid volunteer program bringing more than fifty men and women ranging in age from the teens to the eighties to work alongside regular staff in a host of important areas. The work the volunteers are doing in the museum education program, with the collections, in the library, in the development office, in the archeology program, with our gardens and in our public relations department for lack of budget funds simply would have to be deferred or skipped altogether, to the detriment of the museum's mission and its audience. There is no doubt in my mind that the value of volunteer time put to work under this program will far exceed this year the total amount of the IMS basic support grant to the institution. Beyond the obvious sound economic benefits are the considerable advantages of community outreach and involvement inherent in the volunteer program especially for an institution such as ours located outside a major city in which volunteer resources and the tradition of volunteer service are more firmly established. The group of volunteers we have recruited comes from many walks of life and offers many different skills and talents. And the enthusiasm of these volunteers greatly enhances the educational impact the museum has on its public.

Our public attendance is growing once again after a decline that set in with the close of the bicentennial celebration. Just now we are running about 13% ahead of a year ago and while the energy crunch, for a space, may retard the attendance growth here and at museums and historic houses across the country it cannot suppress an increasing demand on the part of the public for services that such museums offer.

Senator Pell spoke with prescience some years ago at the Village when he said, "this museum is involved with visitors coming from afar. Those numbers dwindle when there is a shortage of fuel. In relationship to the severity of the fuel shortage, so is the museum's potential severely curtailed. And when an outstanding museum loses its potentials of service, the individual community loses --and the nation loses a bright promise."

These are times when that bright promise can be preserved for America's museums. Institutions large and small are going to have to tighten the belt to conserve energy wherever possible. At our institution and at countless others thermostats are being adjusted to settings to meet the requirements of artifactual care, keeping in mind the guidelines established to save fuel. Every area of museum operation is being scrutinized to eliminate waste, to cut costs and to increase income of all kinds. At OSV with energy costs up 400% since 1972 we cannot do otherwise and survive.

But with all the cutting and all the efficiencies certain costs must inevitably increase if the institutions are to continue to serve the public.

The Institute of Museum Services' proposed Cornerstone Grant Program is ideally suited to enable established and developing institutions of varying size to

realize needed additional unrestricted support to meet the increased costs resulting from inflation and significantly more expensive energy. The matching grant formula provides an unbeatable incentive to an institution to identify and secure new income from community sources.

OSV has been awarded a challenge grant by the NEH for energy conservation and visitor promotion so I am quite familiar with the challenge grant concept. In our case a 3 to 1 match has been required and we have just completed successfully the second year match of a three-year program. I have seen first hand the stimulus it has provided in enabling our museum to develop new corporate support, increased membership and greater individual contributions. I believe that the IMS Cornerstone Program, which will provide general operating support, is vitally important to the museum community in that it focuses on the crucial area of unrestricted support. Grant support on a three-year basis would have a dramatic effect on program planning and on the ability of the institution to win far more than a token commitment of new funds from private sources. Unrestricted general operating support as contemplated by the Cornerstone Grant Program can help museums keep staff salaries in step with mandated increases in minimum wage levels, can improve access to those with special needs, can ensure the safekeeping of priceless collections for generations of Americans to come as well as deal positively with the problems of energy costs and inflation cited earlier. I believe that many large institutions would gladly accept the phased 3 to 1 matching formula on a sum of \$250,000 annually, while smaller museums could certainly get tremendous mileage out of the 2 to 1 formula over a phased three year grant with a \$25,000 annual ceiling. To many, the availability of such a grant program would have a definitive role to play

in the very survival of the museum as an institution to serve and educate the public.

I cannot close these remarks without entering an appeal for continuing support for special project grants. In addition to the general operating support concept contained in the IMS Cornerstone Program, special project support makes an important contribution to scores of institutions in the quality of their service to the public.

In sum, I argue for favorable consideration of a plurality of funding opportunities to answer the diverse and pressing needs of America's foremost centers of cultural enrichment--its museums large and small--which will carry to future Americans the priceless heritage now entrusted to our stewardship.

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