

1983

Museum Services Act (1984): Correspondence 10

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Kennedy, Edward M. and Pell, Claiborne, "Museum Services Act (1984): Correspondence 10" (1983). *Museum Services Act (1984)*. Paper 11.
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

February 17, 1983

Mr. Christopher DeMuth
Administrator
Office of Information and
Regulatory Affairs
New Executive Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Mr. DeMuth:

Senator Pell and I would like to express our deep concern regarding the proposed revision of the Institute of Museum Services regulations as published in the Federal Register, December 21, 1982. These proposed changes would have a substantial impact on the museum community and therefore merit careful consideration.

Eligibility for IMS awards would be significantly altered in a number of ways. Assistance from the Institute would be limited to 3 years in any successive 5 year period. This inconsistency in funding would result in a decline in the quality and services of museum programs and would establish an arbitrary selection process that would preclude consideration of applicants on the basis of merit. This represents a significant change in rationale for the IMS program.

The restricting of Challenge grantees from applying for IMS funds in the same year overlooks the acknowledged differences among these funding sources. Each source is a distinct and important resource for museums. Should this restriction be adopted, many museums which have already been awarded Challenge grants would lose general operating support monies in fiscal 1983. Museums would also be ineligible to apply for both general operating support and special project monies in a single year under the new qualifications.

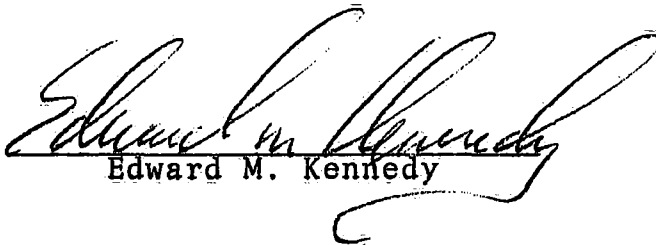
The omission in the proposed IMS regulations of a stated minimum award for museums that report budgets under \$50,000 is of great concern, as the majority of the museum community falls under this budget category. Also, the Board would receive the authority to determine that funds awarded from IMS be matched with non-federal dollars contributed to the museum for its immediately preceding year. Given the current economic state, museums, despite aggressive fundraising, would be forced to substantially reduce or eliminate programs rather than seek other economic sources.

The new rulings would establish a stricter approach to the application process. Failure to submit required information at the time of filing would subject an applicant to rejection on technical grounds without consideration on merits. Compliance with this regulation would be particularly difficult in view of another new provision requiring financial statements from applicants who previously received IMS funds. We recommend that final provisions reflect language in the House Appropriation Committee report on FY 1983 appropriations that supports an appeal process and application reconsideration.

Finally, we urge the reinstatement of the IMS Emergency Grants program to ensure timely emergency assistance for institutions that experience catastrophic circumstances.

It is our hope that the final regulations will reflect a return to former qualification guidelines and the original IMS intent of encouragement and assistance to the museum community.

Sincerely,


Edward M. Kennedy


Claiborne Pell