



ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS

Request:

- We urge Members of Congress to restore full eligibility to receive funds for all types of museums, including zoos and aquariums.
- We urge Congress to reject future use of language – contained in the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Public Law 111-5)* – excluding zoos and aquariums from competing for funding.
- We urge the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies to allow funding for worthy zoo and aquarium projects.

Introduction:

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) defines museums to “include **aquariums**, arboretums and botanical gardens, art museums, youth museums, general museums, historic houses and sites, history museums, nature centers, natural history and anthropology museums, planetariums, science and technology centers, specialized museums, and **zoological parks**.” Federally operated and for-profit museums may not apply for IMLS funds. Museums that are eligible for IMLS grants must be:

- Either a unit of state or local government or a private not-for-profit organization that has tax-exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code;
- Located in one of the fifty states of the United States of America, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated states of Micronesia, or the Republic of Palau; and
- A museum that, using a professional staff, (1) is organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes; (2) owns or uses tangible objects, either animate or inanimate; (3) cares for these objects; and (4) exhibits these objects to the general public on a regular basis through facilities which it owns or operates.

Despite the fact that zoos and aquariums explicitly meet the Federal definition of museums, Congress arbitrarily singled them out for exclusion in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Section 1604 of the ARRA states:

“None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available in this Act may be used by any State or local government, or any private entity, for any casino or other gambling establishment, aquarium, zoo, golf course, or swimming pool.”

For more information, please contact American Association of Museums’ Government Relations at 202-289-1818 or visit us online at www.speakupformuseums.org.

The original ARRA language has already adversely impacted public zoos and aquariums nationwide, especially during this period of severe economic stress. Many zoos and aquariums have had to lay off employees and decrease the services provided to local communities.

This prohibition on public zoos and aquariums has and would continue to unfairly deny communities the proven and effective job creation that zoos and aquariums can offer.

Examples of potential missed opportunities include:

- City infrastructure, including water/sewer systems and broadband telecommunications;
- Green building projects, including energy efficiency retrofits and construction;
- Endangered species recovery plans in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- National Science Foundation and other direct Federal scientific research grants; and
- Environmental education, after school, and at-risk youth employment/training programs.

The ARRA language has caused confusion in the Federal Agencies, which are excluding zoos and aquariums from traditional funding sources not related to ARRA.

Now, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies has said it will not fund zoo and aquarium projects. This is the Subcommittee that funds IMLS.

Talking Points:

It is unfair that public zoos and aquariums continue to be punished, especially when jobs are at stake. Please keep zoos and aquariums eligible for Federal funding as a matter of basic fairness.

Federal Agencies, States, and localities should be able to invest in valuable projects that save and create new jobs in their communities. Zoo and aquarium science/education/conservation programming and infrastructure projects can meet the test of accountability and public benefit, if allowed to compete on a level playing field for Federal funds.

Status:

Various pieces of legislation to create jobs continue to be introduced in both the House of Representatives and Senate. It is anticipated that Congress will work on its jobs agenda for the remainder of the year.