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PRESS RELEASE

From: Colorado-Wyoming Association of Museums
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Colorado-Wyoming Association of Museums met this month in Greeley, Colorado for its 2025 annual meeting. One consistent topic of discussion was unprecedented cuts in federal funding for the arts, sciences, and humanities. Recent executive orders, funding freezes, suspected DEI language reviews, and federal grant revocations have left museums in Colorado and Wyoming scrambling for solutions. Projects, programs, and exhibits already awarded funding are being delayed or cancelled, and jobs have been lost. The museum sector is just a small portion of the entire federal budget, and these cuts will further impact work that has been continually underfunded.

Museums are places of discovery, wonder, and understanding. They provide education, access to many different cultures, foster community dialogue, and help us all to understand the world we live in. Federal support for museums has traditionally come from a wide variety of realms including the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Park Service, and many other agencies. Federal funding also flows to museums through state agencies, universities, and local and regional organizations. Museums take advantage of strategic partnerships with other educational organizations, libraries, workforce service agencies, and community entities that help us achieve our missions. Federal funding freezes to these organizations also impact our community museums.

The Colorado-Wyoming Association of Museums and its members strongly stand against the recent cuts to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and call for the immediate reinstatement of all previously awarded funding. We also call for the restoration of IMLS and NEH staff and operations so that these vital agencies can continue their work of supporting our states' libraries and museums. IMLS is a federally authorized agency, legally established and funded by Congress, with a critical mandate to support cultural and educational institutions across the nation. It is unacceptable for an agency of this importance to be thrown into chaos without a clear, public justification. Immediate action must be taken to restore IMLS operations before irreparable harm is done. CWAM also calls for the end of grant reviews that red-flag suspected DEI words, and a return to peer review processes that judge grant applications on the merit and value of each proposed project or program.

Grants from IMLS and NEH support a broad range of cultural programming in our states. Everything from the Smithsonian Museum on Main Street program that brings traveling exhibits to the rural areas of our states, to the Plains to Peaks Collective of the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) that shares the unique collections of Wyoming and Colorado museums and archives with the world. These funds reach every corner of our states and include the creation of a Native American Wisdom Council to better tell Indigenous people's history in Buffalo, Wyoming, the creation of a Colorado Boarding School Oral History collection at History Colorado, and roof repairs for museums in Meeteetse, Wyoming. Grant funds to our libraries fund state-wide catalogs like the WYLD network, help pay for inter-library loan programs and operations at rural museums, and support family literacy and programs for Spanish-speakers and those with disabilities. These projects are essential and should not be overlooked for short-term savings and political gain.

The biggest casualties with these cuts are our state humanities councils, Colorado Humanities and Wyoming Humanities. With one letter from the federal government, both entities lost most of their funding and are at risk of closure. These are organizations that for over fifty years have promoted humanities education through community-based programs, often in partnership with public libraries and museums. These cuts will have lasting impacts on the cultural fabric of our states, and our rural areas will feel it the most.

CWAM stands in support of IMLS, NEH, Wyoming Humanities, and Colorado Humanities. We ask museum supporters in Colorado and Wyoming to please call or message your federal elected officials and let them know what museums mean to you and what incredible damage these cuts to IMLS and NEH will have on museums' abilities to carry out their missions. Let your state and local elected officials know as well. Let them know that to continue these programs, the burden will fall back to already strained local coffers. Share this news in your circles and with other organizations and colleagues. Finally, help fill this funding void by supporting museums with your donations today. You can find a list of CWAM member institutions on our website museum guide at https://www.cwam-us.org/museum-guide-2/.

To join CWAM and support its efforts to strengthen the larger museum community in Colorado and Wyoming please go to https://www.cwam-us.org/membership/ or reach out via email at advocacy@cwam-us.org.

To find your legislators, you can go to https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials/.

To find more resources for museum advocacy go to the American Alliance of Museums website here: https://www.aam-us.org/programs/advocacy/.

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