



May 6, 2025

Smithsonian Institution: Selected Legislation, 119th Congress

The Smithsonian Institution is a complex of museum, education, research, and revenue-generating entities primarily located in the Washington, DC, region, with additional facilities and activities across the United States and world. For further consideration of Smithsonian activities, see CRS In Focus IF12718, *Smithsonian Institution: Background, Entities, and Leadership*, and CRS Report R44370, *Smithsonian Institution Museums: Selected Issues for Congress*.

This In Focus discusses proposed legislation to authorize new facilities, relationships, or programming within the Smithsonian in the 119th Congress (2025-2026) to date. It excludes discussion of measures that consider Smithsonian appropriations; appointment of citizen Regents; potential assignment of congressional gold medals to the Smithsonian (e.g., S. 338 or H.R. 821); and other proposals.

Siting Authorized Museums

H.R. 1329, S. 1303, Smithsonian American Women's History Museum Act

On February 13, 2025, Representative Nicole Malliotakis introduced H.R. 1329. On April 4, 2025, Senator Amy Klobuchar introduced S. 1303. The bills, entitled the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum (SAWHM) Act, are identical in language, and would authorize the SAWHM to be located in the Reserve of the National Mall.

H.R. 1330, S. 1304, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Latino Act

On February 13, 2025, Representative Malliotakis introduced H.R. 1330. On April 3, 2025, Senator Alex Padilla introduced S. 1304. Both bills, entitled the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Latino (NMAL) Act, are identical in language, and would authorize the NMAL to be located in the Reserve of the National Mall.

The bills—H.R. 1329 and S. 1303 for the SAWHM and H.R. 1330 and S. 1304 for the NMAL, would authorize the transfer of sites the Smithsonian designates for each museum upon notification by the Smithsonian Board of Regents to the heads of federal agencies or entities with jurisdiction of the sites. The head of the agency or entity would be required to submit written notification to the chair and ranking member of the following congressional committees: Senate Rules and Administration; House Administration; Senate Energy and Natural Resources; House Natural Resources; House Transportation and Infrastructure; and House and Senate Committees on Appropriations. Following notification, administrative jurisdiction of the sites would transfer from the agencies to the Smithsonian.

The bills would require the SAWHM Advisory Council or the NMAL Board of Trustees to ensure that their respective Museums “accurately and comprehensively represent the varied cultures, histories, events, and values held by” women for the SAWHM, and by Hispanics or Latinos for the NMAL. The SAWHM Advisory Council and NMAL Trustees are to seek guidance from a broad array of sources “reflecting the diversity of the political viewpoints and authentic experiences held by” women, or Hispanics and Latinos, in the United States, as appropriate. The Secretary of the Smithsonian would be required to report 120 days after enactment, and every two years thereafter, to the same congressional committees on the museums’ efforts to comply with those requirements.

H.R. 1329 and H.R. 1330 were referred to the House Committee on House Administration and the House Committee on Natural Resources. S. 1303 and S. 1304 were referred to the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration.

Considering Creation of New Museums

Potential National Museum of Italian American History and Culture

On February 6, 2025, Representative Thomas R. Suozzi introduced H.R. 1102, the Commission to Study the Potential of a National Museum of Italian American History and Culture Act. The bill would require the establishment of a commission of eight members, with two each appointed by the Speaker of the House, the majority leader of the Senate, and the minority leaders of the House and Senate.

The commission would be required to submit a report to the President and Congress with its recommendations for a plan of action for the establishment and maintenance of an Italian American museum in Washington, DC. A second report would consider the availability and costs of collections to be acquired and housed in the museum; the museum’s impact on existing Italian American-related museums; the development of criteria in consultation with the Smithsonian Institution for evaluating potential locations for the museum within Washington, DC; whether the museum should be located within the Smithsonian Institution; the costs of the museum; and other matters.

H.R. 1102 would require the commission to develop a fundraising plan addressing the ability to support the costs of the museum through contributions from the public, without reliance on appropriated funds. The commission would be required to submit the fundraising plan to independent review to ascertain whether it could meet those

expectations. A legislative plan of action would also be required based on the commission's recommendations.

H.R. 1102 was referred to the House Committees on Natural Resources and House Administration.

Potential National Museum of Irish American History

On March 14, 2025, Representative Brian K. Fitzpatrick introduced H.R. 2121, Commission to Study the Creation of a National Museum of Irish American History. The bill would require the establishment of a commission of 23 members, with seven voting members appointed by the President and three voting members and one nonvoting member each appointed by the Speaker of the House, the majority leader of the Senate, and the minority leaders of the House and Senate.

The commission would be required to submit a report to the President and Congress with its recommendations for a plan of action for the establishment and maintenance of an Irish American museum in Washington, DC. A second report, in consultation with the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, shall consider the availability and costs of collections to be acquired and housed in the museum; the museum's impact on regional Irish American-related museums; locations for the museum within Washington, DC; whether the museum should be located within the Smithsonian Institution; the costs of constructing, operating, and maintaining the museum; and other matters.

H.R. 2121 would require the commission to develop a fundraising plan addressing the ability to support the museum through contributions from the public without reliance on appropriated funds. The commission would be required to submit the plan to independent review to ascertain whether it could meet those expectations.

H.R. 2121 would authorize \$2.1 million for commission activities in its first year, and \$1.1 million for its second. The bill was referred to the House Committees on Natural Resources and House Administration.

Other Proposed Smithsonian Legislation

Black History Matters Act

On February 13, 2025, Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman introduced H.R. 1359, the Black History Matters Act. This bill would direct the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) to study and report on Black history education in public elementary and secondary schools. The study would be required to identify the states and local educational agencies that require Black history education as part of the curriculum taught in public elementary and secondary schools, assess the quality of Black history education provided by schools, and assess the types and quality of instructional material used to teach students about Black history.

H.R. 1359 was referred to the Committee on House Administration.

African Burial Ground International Memorial Museum and Educational Center Act

On February 25, 2025, Representative Daniel S. Goldman introduced H.R. 1568. The same day, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand introduced S. 728. Both measures, entitled the African Burial Ground International Memorial Museum and Educational Center Act, are identical in language, and would establish the African Burial Ground International Memorial Museum and Educational Center at the African Burial Ground National Monument in New York City. The bills would require the National Park Service to acquire property for the construction of a museum that is located adjacent to the African Burial Ground National Historic Landmark in the city.

The bills would require the museum to "become associated with the National Museum of African American History and Culture, in a manner to be determined by" the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the African Burial Ground International Memorial Museum Advisory Council established in the bills, and the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian. The extent of association between the new museum and the NMAAHC is not further specified in the bills.

H.R. 1568 was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources. S. 728 was referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Bring the Space Shuttle Home Act

On April 10, 2025, Senator John Cornyn introduced S. 1403, the Bring the Space Shuttle Home Act. The bill would require the transfer of the *Discovery* space shuttle from Smithsonian's Steven F. Udvar Hazy Center of the National Air and Space Museum to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA's) Johnson Space Center in Houston.

S. 1403 requires the Smithsonian and the NASA Administrator to develop a plan to transfer the vehicle, including a timeline and budget. Within a year after the date of transfer, the Smithsonian would be required to transfer title of the *Discovery* to NASA. NASA would subsequently be required to transfer *Discovery* to a nonprofit entity designated by the Administrator which would maintain the vehicle and provide for public display. S. 1403 authorizes such appropriations as may be necessary to carry out the transfer.

S. 1403 was referred to the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration.

Status of Legislation

No further action has been taken on any of the measures described here as of the date of this report.

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