

# OVERSIGHT OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON RULES AND  
ADMINISTRATION

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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MARCH 30, 2022  
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SECOND SESSION

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## OVERSIGHT OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2022

UNITED STATES SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION  
*Washington, DC*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 11:03 a.m., in Room 301, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Amy Klobuchar, Chairwoman of the Committee, presiding.

**Present:** Senators Klobuchar, Blunt, Warner, Padilla, Ossoff, Capito, and Fischer.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HONORABLE AMY KLOBUCHAR, CHAIRWOMAN, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MINNESOTA**

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Good afternoon. I call to order this hearing of the Rules Committee on Oversight of the Smithsonian Institution. I would like to thank my friend, Ranking Member Blunt, and our colleagues for being here to hear from Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie Bunch.

We are really excited to have you here, Secretary. We know how difficult, as it has been for everyone, getting through this pandemic when you have museums that people like to walk into and crowd hallways and watch films and the like, how hard this has been, and we really appreciate the Smithsonian sticking through.

We have given the support that I hope has been helpful because we want the Smithsonian to keep strong. As we all know, the Smithsonian was founded over 175 years ago thanks to a donation from James Smithson, talk about your name living on forever, who wanted to create an establishment for the “increase and diffusion of knowledge”. This ideal has guided the Smithsonian as it has grown to become the global leader that is today, the world’s largest museum, education, and research complex.

With a presence in nearly every state and 145 countries—I am not sure every American understands the global nature of our outreach here. The Smithsonian encompasses 21 museums, 21 libraries, 9 research centers, the National Zoo—which my husband and daughter and I had an incredible visit to. I felt like she was five again, but in fact, she is 26, and got to hear about how the zoo was faring during the pandemic, including the lion contracting coronavirus, who seems to be okay. More than 200 affiliate institutions. These institutes have enhanced our understanding of the ar-

tistic, cultural, scientific, and civic contributions that have shaped our country.

My State of Minnesota is home to one Smithsonian affiliate, the Bell Museum in St. Paul, which features exhibits and STEM education programs. I was also proud to learn about all the Minnesota Chippewa artifacts that are now on display at the National Museum of the American Indian, which is, by the way, my husband's favorite place for lunch in all of Washington, DC. Every year, millions of people visit the Smithsonian and millions more engage through your online resources.

Even as we faced the pandemic, the Smithsonian had a whopping 5.2 million visitors in 2021, while also expanding your digital reach to 205 million online visitors in 2021. That is up from 178 million the year before. I am sure we are looking forward to hearing how you are building on that. While COVID resulted in temporary closures of facilities, the Smithsonian worked to open your doors as quickly and safely as possible. With the exception of the ever popular Air and Space Museum, which we understand is under construction, all the museums are now open to the public.

While some museums are still working to get more staff on board, we will want to hear about that, all but two museums are on track to welcome visitors seven days a week by Memorial Day. Notably, this is the Committee's first hearing with the Secretary since we passed legislation to establish two new museums, the American Women's History Museum and the National Museum of the American Latino.

I was proud to support the legislation which passed in this Committee unanimously, that is right, before being signed into law in December 2020. Site selection, we know, for both museums are now underway, and this Committee will have a role in reviewing the options later this year. It is important for this process to stay on track so these museums can open as quickly as possible. I know other progress is being made in terms of hiring Jorge Zamanillo, who will become the first Director of the National Museum of the American Latino in May.

We are, of course, fortunate to have you, Mr. Secretary, in your current position to help us here given that you were the first Director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. I know you are committed to building the new museums while of course keeping strong all of our museums, our existing museums and work. We also have to remain committed to the backlog of maintenance projects at the institution. We know how much that costs, over \$1 billion.

Importantly, the omnibus legislation led by our colleagues, Senator Leahy and Shelby, included resources for the Smithsonian to support these projects. While this funding will help, we understand it is not everything you need. Finally, we are nearing the end of the Smithsonian's 5-year strategic plan that was launched in 2017.

I look forward to hearing from you, Secretary Bunch, about that. I will now recognize my good friend, and I mean that, it is not just like a Senate line, Senator Blunt.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HONORABLE ROY BLUNT, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

Senator BLUNT. That is right. Good friends and really good friends, so you have to clarify that in the Senate, and Chairwoman Klobuchar and I are glad to make that clear. Every chance we get, we do lots of work together on this Committee and in a lot of other areas that we have worked together for a long time.

Chairwoman, thank you for calling this hearing on the Smithsonian Institution. Certainly lucky to have Secretary Bunch leading the institution, but here with us today. When you were here the last time, Secretary, we were considering the legislation that the Chairwoman mentioned to establish the National Museum of the American Latino and the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum.

Certainly, as she has already pointed out, your great experience of being the Founding Director of the National Museum of African American History creates a real opportunity for you to give the kind of advice and guidance this project needs. As the Chairman of the Committee, when we authorized the two museums in 2020, I am particularly looking forward to hearing more about how they are progressing now almost a year and a half after that unanimous recommendation by this Committee that we move forward.

We are excited about those two new museums, but we certainly do not want to lose sight of the challenges in dealing with the deferred maintenance backlog, the aging buildings and infrastructure really have a backlog that I think you have estimated to be about \$1 billion, and a shortage of space to really house the collections. Which between the collections and the unique museums that those collections are housed in, they really are America's treasures, and we are grateful to you for taking responsibility for those treasures.

We are going to be excited to watch the two new museums be first located and then built, but also we are committed on this Committee, and I know you are committed to see that the investment that Americans have made in the old facilities is honored by how well we maintain them. Nearly three years ago, when you became Secretary, that was the middle, or the beginning really, of implementing the 5-year strategic plan.

I think we are now in the last year of that plan and look forward to your comments about that. But again, great to have you with us today. Great to have you leading the Smithsonian Institution. Chairwoman, thank you for having this hearing.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Thank you very much. Secretary, if you could raise your right hand. Do you swear that the testimony you will give before the Committee shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?

Secretary BUNCH. Yes.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Thank you very much. You can be seated, and we will now proceed to your testimony. Thank you very much.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF LONNIE G. BUNCH III, SECRETARY,  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION WASHINGTON, DC**

Secretary BUNCH. Chairwoman Klobuchar, Ranking Member Blunt, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. As you have said, the past two years have been challenging for the Smithsonian, as they have been for everybody in this country. But I am proud of the way that we have been able to continue to serve Americans in this time of need, while also following the guidance of medical experts to ensure the health and safety of our visitors.

The Smithsonian community has been remarkable in its ability to pivot to a more digital institution, which has been borne out by the more than 50 million online visits that we have got in the past year compared to the past two years. The diligence of our employees have allowed us to reopen all of our museums, which will soon be open seven days a week. Events called for becoming nimbler, more dynamic, and more creative in ways we serve the public, and our staff rose to that challenge.

As you know, Congress passed the legislation for two new museums, the National Museum of the American Latino and the Smithsonian American Women's Museum. I have to be honest, I am very excited to see what they will become in the months and years ahead, because in many ways they present a unique opportunity to blend tradition and innovation, to use digital technologies in new ways to tell the full American story, and to help serve the greater good by having a profound impact on people's lives.

When I last addressed this Committee about the legislation, I underscored the need to understand and plan for the obligations they will incur over time. This is a lifetime commitment, increasing the needs for collection space, maintenance, and staffing in perpetuity. But I am confident, with the full support of Congress, we will be able to make these museums exemplars. I can report that things are proceeding quite well with them. We have selected advisory councils for each.

The Founding Director of the Latino Museum, Jorge Zamanillo, arrives in May, and the search is well underway for the director of the Women's History Museum. As somebody who went through the site selection process with the National Museum of African American History and Culture, I can testify how consequential a museum's location is, both as a symbol and as a driver of success. In choosing the locations for our newest museums, we approached the consulting firm to help us develop a more strategic approach.

We are applying due diligence to all the possible sites, making significant progress toward determining the finalists. But being a positive influence on our Committees and on our Nation means setting a higher standard for ourselves. This requires not just doing good work, but also fostering environment where everyone is fully respected and welcomed.

A series of incidents at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute have recently come to light that fall far short of the standard and that appalls me. I am personally offended, and I want to assure you that I will not tolerate such behavior. You know, I have dedicated my career to fighting for equality and fairness. I am



grateful for the strong and courageous women who came forward to show us where we need to do better.

As a result of that, even before, we implemented many policy and procedural changes to make the Smithsonian a model place to work and visit. This includes making significant enhancements to the Smithsonian's anti-harassment resources, reporting processes, and preventive initiatives like the SI Civil Program.

We are expanding its staff and increasing its capacity to allow all employees to report harassment, violence, or retaliatory behaviors in the workplace. To access and improve our workplace culture, we need to begin to more accurately measure harassment complaints and other issues. The SI Civil Program is putting tools in place, and the institution will be more effective and more transparent as a result of that.

The institution and I are determined to create a more inclusive, respectful, and welcoming Smithsonian that lives up to our ideals and embodies our values. In many ways, museums have also undergone a healthy reexamination of objects in the collection, how they were obtained. The National Museum of Natural History, the National Museum of the American Indian, have long had robust efforts to repatriate cultural patrimony, but we recognize we must do more.

We put together an ethical returns working group to identify the provenance of collections and increase our repatriation efforts. Because when the Smithsonian works with other countries to retrieve and protect their cultural heritage, it is not only the right thing to do, but it is also in our best interest as a Nation. The international efforts of the Smithsonian Cultural Resource Initiative are culture diplomacy in action.

When global conflicts like Ukraine endangers lives and threatens to erase the culture and history of a people, it is vitally important to keep open all channels of dialog. To be clear, even though we have continued to serve the public effectively during this time, this has been a difficult time, and there are some long term budgetary concerns.

Obviously among those are the impact of the new museums, declining revenue during the pandemic, and the need to modernize and secure our systems as our digital capacities improve. The President's fiscal year 2023 budget aims to address some of those challenges, and your support and guidance gives me great confidence in our future success. You know, the Smithsonian's mission of the increase and diffusion of knowledge is not just a slogan.

For 175 years, it has been a covenant with the Nation. We are obligated to lead responsibly, guided by ethics and morals, serving in a way that enriches the lives of our neighbors, the American people, and the citizens of the world. With your help, we will be able to do that effectively for another 175 years.

Thank you for holding this hearing, for your ongoing support, and your commitment to working with us to improve our shared future as a Nation. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Bunch was submitted for the record.]

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Excellent. Thank you. I think we will have Senator Blunt go first. Thanks.

Senator BLUNT. Well, thank you, Chairwoman. That is thank you for letting me go first. Secretary Bunch, like you, I was deeply troubled by the allegations of sexual harassment at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Center in Panama. I am certainly grateful for the women who came forward to point this out.

You mentioned that you changed policies there and that those policies extend throughout the system. How do you think those policies have made the system or will make the system a more safe and respectful place to work?

Secretary BUNCH. Well, Senator, for me, this is really job one, to create that safe workplace. What we wanted to do was, first of all, create a system that would allow us to give people the freedom to report concerns. Basically craft a system that would allow people to use online devices to have 24–7 call-ins, to be able to make sure we can record, and so people feel safe.

To create then the kind of extra training to let people know at all levels of the Smithsonian, not only is this not acceptable, but everybody in the Smithsonian is responsible for helping to make sure that we create that safe workplace. We wanted to be able to create a system to allow us to document, to actually track it, to be able to know based on the metrics how we are doing with it, and then I think the most important thing is to recognize this is about changing a culture.

This is about creating an opportunity for people to recognize that they all have a responsibility. What we have done is made major changes in Panama and then taken those changes, those reporting changes, that extra training, bringing that to the Smithsonian to make sure that the entire institution is the place that lives up to our values.

Senator BLUNT. Are you seeing a difference in the responses you have had?

Secretary BUNCH. We are. What has been very powerful is that the Smithsonian has embraced this very strongly. That whether it is museum directors or supervisors, people have recognized that this is an opportunity for us to be better. I have directed my Under Secretary for Administration to take this on as one of his primary goals.

In essence, we have made sure that everything from training to expanding the opportunity for people to understand why this is important, how to report these issues—in essence, this is something that we have shown a light on and will continue to improve as we move forward.

Senator BLUNT. Well, I am sure we will continue to be interested in that and we will be watching that. The last two years, the management through the COVID, what a challenge. Has—what are the current operating—what is the current operating status? What should people visiting the museums expect to see when they get there over the next few weeks and months?

Secretary BUNCH. We are in the process so that by the end of May, almost the entire Smithsonian, all the museums will be open, with the exception of Air and Space, will be open seven days a week. We expect to be able to return to serving the public the way

we did before the pandemic. What we had to do, though, is recognize that the pandemic has asked us and forced us to be more nimble, to be more flexible.

We spent a lot of time getting to know what the new visitors will want, what our staff needs, and that has allowed us to create a glide path to opening. What we have done now is because of the challenge of the virus, of not being able to have all the staff we need, especially the contractors, is that we are moving slowly to open by the end of May, because what I want to make sure is that when the public returns in large numbers, we are ready and able to serve them.

I want to make sure that not only do we have the adequate security, but that we also have the people who are running the shops and the restaurants. I want them to have the full Smithsonian experience.

Right now, the museums are open, not seven days, but every museum is open to give the public an opportunity to engage the Smithsonian. By the end of May, we will be back to our pre-pandemic levels of opening with a few exceptions.

Senator BLUNT. With one of those exceptions, I was surprised that the Air and Space Museum, the closure there that I do not think was anticipated when you started that renovation project. But part of that or all of that will be closed over part of the summer, am I right on that?

Secretary BUNCH. Part of what was key to me is we wanted to open the Air and Space Museum as quickly as we can. It turned out that by closing it for a series of months, it allows us to reopen the museum to do the work that needs to be done. Partly, that was a response of the pandemic, the challenges the pandemic raised. But the reality is that I was committed to saying, how do we, as quickly as we can, open one of the flagship museums, and the best way to do it was to close it for a short period of time.

Senator BLUNT. It will be open for a while in late May and then close or no?

Secretary BUNCH. It will be closed—it is going to close very soon. It will be closed until the fall.

Senator BLUNT. But everything but that will be open on the Smithsonian, on the mall?

Secretary BUNCH. Yes.

Senator BLUNT. Thank you. Thank you, Chairwoman.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Okay, now I am going to turn to Senator Warner, who is with us online. Then I am going to ask my question, and then you, Senator Capito. Is that okay with you? I think we are all staying within our five minutes, but I am turning to Senator Warner because he has one of the largest Air and Space Museums, right? Just a little bigger than the St. Paul, Minnesota Bell Museum. With that, Senator Warner.

Senator WARNER. Thank you for that gracious comment, Madam Chairperson. Secretary Bunch, it is great to see you at least remotely. Let me thank you for the courtesy of having me up to your office a few months back. I want to talk for a moment about the fact that back in December 2020, I joined with so many of my colleagues in the creation of two museums for the Smithsonian, a

American Latino Museum and a Smithsonian American Women's History Museum.

It brought back a memory as we were going forward on that, that when I was Governor, I remember walking around with my wife and my then seven year old daughter around Capital Square in Richmond. Basically, every statue was of a dead white guy, most of them actually former confederates, and my daughter asked, you know, where is the statue of Rosa Parks?

My wife being smarter than me said, well Rosa Parks was not from Virginia. But it let us on a journey to the story of Barbara Johns, who led the walkout at Moten High School in Prince Edward County that would end up being one of that law cases that were part of the *Brown vs. Board of Education*, and we ultimately got a statue representing people of color and women and children on Capital Square in Richmond.

I have worked since then with my great friends, Tim Kaine, to make sure we actually take out of Statutory Hall the statue of Robert E. Lee and replace it with hopefully Barbara Johns. I guess that as a lead in is Secretary Bunch, you know, tell me what the status on a macro level is around the Women's Museum, and how are you going to leverage all of the other collections that you have got to make sure that those component parts that may be, you know, in the African American Museum or in the History Museum actually can be part of this Women's Museum.

Secretary BUNCH. Well, we are moving very well with the Women's Museum. Obviously, one of the big issues is site selection, where we will place this museum, and that is something we are working on now. We know that there are many people who feel that the museum has to be on the mall. I am one of them. There are other people who believe that the mall does not have room for the new museums, so we are going to be able to work with many people to come back to you to say, here is where we think these museums are best suited and we will need your help.

I think the great strength of the Smithsonian is that we give different portals into what it means to be an American, whether you go through the African American Museum or you go through the American History Museum. I think the Women's Museum will really contribute mightily to that. It will be a two-sided coin. That on the one side, this museum will let us tell the story of women in a deep, personal way that will really allow people to discover stories that have been not told.

But it will also allow us to use the story of women as a lens to say all of us are shaped in profound ways by this, and this is a story for us all. I think that what we want to make sure happens in the Smithsonian is we want to make sure that the story of women is in every part of the Smithsonian.

While the Women's Museum will help focus and catalyze our actions, the reality is that we want people to be able to come to the story of women when they go to the African American Museum, when they go to the Museum of American History. This will be part of a way we build on the strengths of the Smithsonian, we illuminate certain stories, but we make sure that everyone has an opportunity to understand how central the story of women are to all of us.

Senator WARNER. Well, I appreciate that, and I am not going to—I am going to—you know, the Chairwoman is letting Senator Blunt and I go ahead of her question, so I am not going to dive into those site location questions. I am sure she will take the lead on that. But I do want to, you know, following on what Senator Blunt talked about, I appreciate how difficult it has been to manage the institutions through COVID. I just, my question to you is, you know, as the local guy, as Senator Klobuchar pointed out, you know, we are always aware and using the Smithsonian.

I do think, you know, having a couple of years of COVID and the fact that there may be Members of Congress that are not as familiar with the Smithsonian, but as you reopen, in my last 40 seconds adhering to my five minutes, if you could go ahead and give us a little comment about, you got any ideas on how you might reopen the Smithsonian, get more Members of Congress to engage, and how are you going to actually get the public back as well?

But particularly, since we are down to 24 seconds, any ideas on how we can get more Members of Congress reengaged with the Smithsonian?

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. There is no proof that I will cut you off Senator Warner—

Senator WARNER. I know but I know you control that gavel—

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Yes, well Senator Blunt and I just agreed as you referred to yourself as just the local guy, you are certainly the humble, lovable local guy to us.

[Laughter.]

Senator WARNER. Madam Chair, do not take away my last few—oh my god, I am coming to—

[Laughter.]

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Finish your question.

Senator WARNER. Please, take moment to say, let's get Members of Congress reengaged as we talked about in your office.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Excellent. Secretary Bunch, please answer that question.

Secretary BUNCH. It is crucially important that we remember that the public has real thirst for return to the Smithsonian. One of the things that was really clear is that even when we closed our doors, we kept the Smithsonian open digitally, and the public really has always said, we cannot wait to get back to the Smithsonian.

We expect our numbers to continue to grow. My hope is that everyone in Congress knows that the Smithsonian is a jewel, and it is a jewel for you and for your constituents. My hope is that we will find even greater ways to engage Members of Congress. We always serve your constituents.

For me, the bottom line is the Smithsonian is a wonderful opportunity for all of us to understand and learn and be made better. We want to make sure that our friends in Congress do that as well.

Senator WARNER. Well, I would just say Chair Klobuchar and Ranking Member Blunt have been great at bringing Members of Congress. I know we went to the Art Museum at one point, but I would love to work with the Chair and others on how we might do some kind of event in conjunction for Congress and Congressional Members to kind of get a first glimpse at the reopening.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Yes, exactly. I was thinking that. We may not travel to Virginia, but I was just talking to the Secretary about this, Senator Warner, because we did, Senator Blunt and I hosted the Rules Committee in the National Gallery, and so many of the Members came. But I think we should now extend an invitation from the Rules Committee to all Members of the Senate and pick a good location, so that—

Senator WARNER. Once again—by the Chairperson—  
[Laughter.]

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Okay, excellent. I am going to followup, first of all, on something that we mentioned earlier and that was Secretary Bunch, the 5-year strategic plan for the Smithsonian developed, of course, in 2017 with key goals such as ensuring the institution works together across facilities, expands reach through digital first, little did we know we were going to then encounter the pandemic which drove that even more, drives interdisciplinary research, and preserves our natural and cultural heritage.

As we reach the conclusion of the five years, can you reflect on progress as well as what you see as the top priorities going forward?

Secretary BUNCH. When I became Secretary, I looked at the strategic plan and I said, okay, how do I make it my own. How do I make sure that their priorities are in line, and most of them are. What I did is I said we have five major priorities. One is getting the Smithsonian in every classroom and every home. In other words, really expanding our digital capacities. Obviously, the pandemic has both challenged us, but candidly, it gave us the opportunity.

I am so proud of the way the staff pivoted, how we created portals that allow people to come to the Smithsonian to be able to find natural history or American history. In a way, that notion of building on what is the virtual Smithsonian is still one of the number one priorities, and we have hired people to work in that direction.

The number two priority is really doing something that often you do not say about the Smithsonian, making it more nimble. That we wanted to basically make sure that we improved things like the hiring processes, the contracting processes. I felt you could not have new wine in an old bottle.

We have really made major steps. Now for the first time in my career, I have seen the Smithsonian hiring actually working effectively. The third piece for me was really saying, how do we use the science of the Smithsonian, which is so amazing, whether it is in climate change or life on other planets, how do we use that to really make sure that we are helping the American public. Really focusing on science, science education, science outreach.

The fourth is really saying that at a time when Americans are debating what does it mean to be an American, the Smithsonian will help answer that question. It ought to be a place as a trusted source that helps you understand the history of this country, helps you understand how that history contextualizes who we are today, and really points us toward a shared future.

Then finally for me, the most important part of this in my mind was how is the Smithsonian helping American education at a time when so many people are struggling to find ways to educate. How

does the Smithsonian help. How do we use the resources, how do we use the creativity to help students achieve their goals. Those are the five areas that I have been focused on and we have really made great progress in all of those.

I feel very good that we are fulfilling the hopes of the original strategic plan, and we are moving now in a direction to take those five goals that I have.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Thank you very much. Do you have a minute? Do you want—Senator Capito, if you want to go and I will come back to me. Go ahead.

Senator CAPITO. I think they just asked me if Senator Padilla could go in front of me, so.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Okay, you guys figure that out between you. I will continue on. The second question is really followup to what Senator Warner—and thank you for going through all of those priorities. It was very helpful. Second question is a followup on the two new museums. Obviously, we are very excited about the American Women's History Museum, as well as the National Museum of the American Latino.

The legislation outlined two years for site selection. You talked very well, explaining where that is on the Women's Museum. That work is underway, scheduled to be completed by the end of the year. Do you expect the site selection process will be concluded on time for both of them? What is the status of the Latino Museum site selection?

Secretary BUNCH. Site selection for both is underway and doing very well. What we have done is because of the different views, we decided to examine an array of sites off the mall and on the mall and near the mall. What we are down to is a limited number of sites that we are reviewing, and that the challenge will be candidly the fact that the Smithsonian only controls one site, the Arts and Industries Building.

As we come to some decisions about the best sites for the museums, we may need Congress's help to be able to make sure that the ownership gets transferred to the Smithsonian. But my sense is that we will be able to make a recommendation to the Board of Regents in the fall, and to be able to sort of fulfill our end of year deadline for both of these museums.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Excellent. That is really good news, and we look forward to hearing from you then. Last, \$1 billion in backlog is the estimate. How are you prioritizing the backlog of the maintenance projects?

Secretary BUNCH. You know, I have always said that one of the great challenges of the Smithsonian is maintenance and backlog. That in essence what I have said is that we can do both. We can build new museums. We can address these issues as long as we get the support from Congress. But what I have also said is, let us be very strategic. Let us recognize that just using the maintenance line is not enough.

What we have done is strategically look at our capital projects to say, how do we use those projects as well to deal with the backlog. For example, one of the great parts where we had the largest backlog was the National Air and Space Museum. As we have made it one of our priorities for the capital project, we are not only

be able to rejuvenate that building, but to really address so much of the backlog. That is what we are looking at.

We are trying to be very strategic in making sure that we are marrying the maintenance money that we have with our capital vision to begin to address the backlog. But clearly, it is going to be a long term effort.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Okay, very good. Senator Capito has once again showed her goodwill and deferred here to our great Senator from the State of California, staunch advocate for the National Museum of the American Latino, Senator Padilla.

Senator PADILLA. Thank you, Madam Chair. Appreciate the flexibility, Senator Capito. One of those days you are all familiar with, smacked between Homeland Security and Budget. With my limited time, appreciate the opportunity to raise a couple of issues and priorities and ask some questions.

I will begin by sharing with you, Mr. Secretary, my background and the reason for my interest on your digitization comments. You know, in my home State of California, we have long believed in the importance and necessity of recording and remembering our shared history. For students of California history and for those and maybe for those who are not aware, in 1850, the very first law signed by the very first Governor of California established the requirement of the maintenance of the public archives, very first law by the very first Legislature and Governor.

That tells you what a priority it is. Today, the California State Archives is a division of the California Secretary of State's Office, the position I had the honor of holding for six years prior to joining the Senate. One of my priorities at the time was to make sure that yes, the historical treasures of California as required were not just preserved, not just protected, but as available as possible for the general public to view and to enjoy.

Part of my strategy was to increase digitization efforts of the state's archives, collections, curating exhibits, etcetera, so that they could be accessed by any person with an internet connection, not just anywhere in the state, but frankly, anywhere around the world. We did this through strategic utilization of state resources as well as engaging in public, private partnerships.

I know the mission of public access of our shared history is something that the Smithsonian shares, but the incredible knowledge and history held within the museums, for the most part, is still limited to only those who are able to come and visit in person. You have spoken to digitization through your opening remarks, and I would like to just expand for a minute on what other short term and long term goals there might be or plans there might be to share our content with a broader audience.

Secretary BUNCH. Well, thank you, thank you very much. You know, when I actually did honest work as a historian, now I shake hands, I was a California scholar, so I know a lot about what California has done in its archives. For me, what is important is to realize that the treasures of the Smithsonian are too important just to be in the hands of those who can come visit. We have really made a major concerted effort, first through the educational work that we have done, to make sure that people have access to the collections through the Smithsonian Learning Lab.



You can go into that, and you can go type oh, California, or type women's suffrage, or butterflies and get everything the Smithsonian has. We have also made sure that by the work that we have done with both the Latino Museum and with the Smithsonian Women's History Initiative, what we have done is made sure that those stories are being told so these museums are being birth digitally.

Therefore, we are making sure that story is being told. It is important that every museum, from the Air and Space Museum to the African American Museum to the Museum of American History, has major projects of making their collections accessible digitally.

But what we want to make sure, is we also want to make sure that we give people the right portals into that, not just simply putting out material, but really making it of use for teachers, for educators, for parents. This is really a priority of ours.

Senator PADILLA. If I can also just add, not just static representations of what is in the collection, but with an eye toward that user experience, even if it is digitally, someday a VR experience, and maybe someday soon. Second, I just want to echo the prior comments made by the Chair, by you, Mr. Secretary, on our commitment to the two new museums that were recently approved.

Sharing the stories of American women and Latinos across the country is part of telling a more inclusive story of the United States of America. I appreciate the update on the site selection process. Will add my voice to those others that are urging it on the mall location, and I know there is multiple options there. But in my final seconds here, just want to raise the topic of a sort of maintenance, in some cases deferred maintenance, and the increased risk of climate change.

I know you read as I read recently in the New York Times, an article about flooding issues in a number of the institutions. Climate change is only going to continue to become—or to grow in terms of the threat that it represents. What help do you need from Congress to help address this issue before we begin to lose treasures? Thankfully, we have not lost anything yet from my understanding. But what you need from Congress?

Secretary BUNCH. Well, obviously climate change, especially in Washington, is a Federal issue, right. It is the National Park Service, it is not just the Smithsonian. What we have done is really two things. One is we created a climate action plan, which allows us to make sure that when it is an institution, we are thinking creatively about sustainability. What are the things we need to do?

For example, when we built a National Museum of African American History and Culture, it was the first green museum on the mall, so sustainability was at the heart of that. When we make changes like we are doing at the National Air and Space Museum, it is also about sustainability and providing materials that would protect through pumps and walls to protect the collections.

What we have also done is recognize that we had to make changes. We have moved most of the vulnerable collections up so that that is not an issue. But we have also had a special response group of staff whose job it is in an emergency to rescue collections. We have we have taken all of those steps. I think the reality is the

challenge is going to be how do we, how does Congress help the mall, the entire mall deal with the issue of flooding?

Part of that is, what we are building in terms of being able to make sure that we can handle flooding, but also is to have a plan that includes the Smithsonian, the National Park Service, that allows us to come up with the right strategies.

Senator PADILLA. Thank you. I will just warn you that next week there is going to be two young Americans, one aged nine, one age seven, who are going to be visiting some of the Smithsonian. They have visited a few National Parks. Already have their junior ranger badge collection going. I don't know if it is a passport book they are going to be stamp it or something, but I am sure you will be hearing them, no doubt.

[Laughter.]

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. They are very well behaved. With that, another local Senator from the area who cherishes your work and that would be Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Secretary for being with us here today. I am going to ask just a quick—couple of quick questions I think I will get some quick answers on. You said the site selection is at the end of December?

Secretary BUNCH. Yes.

Senator CAPITO. That has not been done as yet. How many total employees does your in total—in all the 21 Smithsonians?

Secretary BUNCH. About 7,000 people work for the Smithsonian.

Senator CAPITO. Okay. Let me ask you this, and Senator Blunt kind of alluded to this, but for visitors coming in, do you follow the guidelines from the CDC in terms of mask wearing in and out of the facility? Where are you on that right now?

Secretary BUNCH. Well, where we are is that we have decided that we do not need the visitors to wear masks. We follow the science, the CDC science, we listen to what the District of Columbia says. But also candidly, because so many of our visitors come from all over the country, so it is not just sort of what is happening in the District, we really look at what is going on around the Nation. We are—we have eliminated the mask mandate so that visitors can come in at full capacity.

Senator CAPITO. Great. Great. Do you have to limit numbers of people? I know certain museums have to have tickets and certain don't. Could you tell us which ones have to have tickets?

Secretary BUNCH. During the pandemic, we moved to a ticketing system so that I can control the crowds.

Senator CAPITO. Right. I was—

Secretary BUNCH. We just eliminated that. Right now you still need tickets to the National Museum of African American History and Culture. It is still one of the popular places, so you need tickets for that. But other than that, we are stepping away from tickets.

Senator CAPITO. Okay. Is that in May or is that now?

Secretary BUNCH. The museum needs tickets—African American needs tickets all the time.

Senator CAPITO. All the time. But the other museums for—spring breakers coming in—?

Secretary BUNCH. Come on in.

Senator CAPITO. Okay. You do not have to hold the crowd on that, unless you—?

Secretary BUNCH. Not unless something happens with the pandemic.

Senator CAPITO. Right. Good news. Good news. Let me ask you this then on the virtual—on the African American Museum. Obviously, you know this very well. For the ticketing process, I mean we have had constituents that have not been able to get tickets. It has been frustrating for them and for us. Are there suggestions there? Is it starting to tail off a little bit, maybe now that the people that want to see it first got there? How do you navigate that?

Secretary BUNCH. You know, that was my expectation, to be perfectly honest, but that has not happened.

Senator CAPITO. Has not happened—

Secretary BUNCH. Part of the challenge is to make sure you have the right visitor experience. That is why we are maintaining the crowds, because for me, I remember before we had tickets, the lines into that museum were out to the Washington Monument, and there were too many people, especially many seniors, who were suffering in the summer sun.

Senator CAPITO. Yes. Is it pretty seamless getting—I mean, I am going to admit I have never tried to do it but—?

Secretary BUNCH. We have we have finalized and fine-tuned the process that we allow people—and the other thing we do is the security knows that if people come and do not have tickets, if the museum is not crowded or if there is opportunities, people are let in. We try to be that flexible.

Senator CAPITO. Yes, I appreciate that. Thank you. I was really interested in your statements when you talked about repatriating cultural patrimony, which is three big words there. But, and then further on in your statements talking about ethical returns working group. Tell me about what that is. Is that—I know your collection. What we all see in your museums is probably one-one-hundredth of your entire collection. How do you work that? I am interested in that.

Secretary BUNCH. Sure. The Smithsonian has over 155 million objects. Part of what we wanted to do is that as we have followed the rules of NAGPRA and have begun to return materials to native tribes, what I realized is that we needed an overall group that would look at this whole question of, are the collections ethically ours and maintained?

If not, what should we do? What is the processes? Where we have focused recently has been on statues from Benin, these Benin bronzes that are there. They are beautiful. But these Benin bronzes that the Smithsonian has, we did a lot of research, and it turns out they were stolen from the Kingdom of Benin by the British Army in 1897.

Senator CAPITO. Then somebody was collecting them at some point, and they donated them—

Secretary BUNCH. Once the army got them, they were given away, sold, etc. Some came—they are all over the world. The largest number is at the British Museum. We looked at this and we said talking to the government of Nigeria, we said, here is what we would like to do, we would like to, if the Board of Reagents ap-

prove, and so we are still in the middle of a process, we would like to give legal ownership back to the country of Nigeria, but that we would keep some of these so that we can interpret them, explore them, etcetera.

That way, we want to make sure that something that was stolen really gets back to the legitimate owners.

Senator CAPITO. Oh, that is very interesting. I guess I can expect the original statue of the West Virginia Mountaineer to be returned too. I am kidding, I am kidding.

Secretary BUNCH. There is a process.

[Laughter.]

Senator CAPITO. Thank you very much.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Very good. Thank you very much. Senator Capito. Last up, I believe, is Senator Ossoff. Thank you, newest Senator on our Committee and doing a great job. Thanks.

Senator OSSOFF. Thank you, Madam Chair and welcome Secretary Bunch. When I heard that Chair Klobuchar, Ranking Member Blunt were putting on this hearing, I was really enthused and excited because the Smithsonian is such a jewel for our country, a globally renowned institution.

The service that you and your team provide to the American public and to the world in the arts and sciences, historic preservation, the recording of history, all of these are essential and deeply appreciated. On behalf of my constituents in Georgia, I just want to thank you and please ask you to convey to your whole team our appreciation.

Secretary BUNCH. Thank you. I will. Thank you so much.

Senator OSSOFF. I want to just ask you now since I am closing out the hearing, what else do you need, or do you want from Congress in order to expand and augment the extraordinary work that you are doing? What is the 20 year vision? What should we be investing in now so that this institution is moving on to higher and higher heights in decades to come?

Secretary BUNCH. I think, you know, Senator Blunt and others have made it really clear, there are several priorities that we have got to look for the long term. One is to make sure that we can handle and preserve and protect the collections. The collections or the DNA of the Smithsonian. That even though we are going to do more and more virtually, we still have this sort of amazing cultural patrimony to protect.

To help us determine how we build the right spaces that allow us to protect the material in the best way we can, such as the support you have given us for Pod 6 at the Suitland site, which is allowing us to share a space with the National Gallery of Art that allows us to protect more of our collections.

I think making sure we can protect the collections are key. Second, to be honest, is the support to build the new museums. This is going to be a major endeavor that is going to take a public, private partnership. The one thing I know from National Museum of African American History and Culture is that it is the public money from Congress that we are able to leverage with the private donors. We need to make sure that we have that kind of commitment.

Then I think the third is really helping us issue, do through oversight—think about what are the possibilities that the Smithsonian is now anticipating? How do we make sure that we serve the educational community better? How do we make sure that we are providing the kind of cultural diplomacy that helps America develop its relationships overseas? I think those are some of the things that would be very helpful.

Senator OSSOFF. Could you please walk me through some of your ongoing or past or contemplated activities, partnerships beyond the District of Columbia, in states and localities across the country, and then also what you are doing internationally?

Secretary BUNCH. Sure. I have created something called Our Shared Future, and under that, one of the most important initiatives is what I am calling a rural initiative, to say that the Smithsonian needs to think creatively about how does it work with rural communities throughout this country.

What we are doing is looking at what are the educational partnerships with rural communities, how do we work with groups like let's say the 4-H clubs and how that allows us to bring the resource of the Smithsonian into communities in Georgia, North Carolina, and North Dakota.

I think that notion of exploring our rural heritage and our rural communities is really important. That is something we really want to do. Internationally, the Smithsonian has always been a global place. Many of our scholars have relationships overseas. My own work in South Africa. We have amazing scientists that do work in Kenya. We do a lot of work throughout Europe.

Part of the goal here is to bring a sense of order to that. Traditionally, our international work is often ad hoc. It is based on your own personal relationship. We always want to do that. But now we want to think about how do we—how to be much more strategic.

With this cultural research initiative that we have, how do we help nations as they are grappling with the challenge of climate change, war, natural disaster? Really trying to make sure that the Smithsonian that has so many people who can help preserve, collect, and protect, that we are doing that globally as well.

Senator OSSOFF. Thank you for that overview, Secretary Bunch. Will you commit to working with me and my office and educational leaders in Georgia to identify every opportunity that we share to collaborate and invest in enriching the classroom experience of Georgia children in rural communities and our major metros alike?

Secretary BUNCH. I am the son of two teachers. Education is crucial to what I believe, and so we are committed at the Smithsonian to define the partnerships that allow us to do that. Because the one thing I have learned is that the Smithsonian does not have broad enough shoulders to do everything. But if we work collaboratively, we can really have the kind of impact we want.

Senator OSSOFF. I am going to take that as a yes.

Secretary BUNCH. Yes.

Senator OSSOFF. Okay, thank you. I yield.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Thank you very much, Senator Ossoff. This is now coming to a close. I believe we are going to have some votes. I want to, first of all, thank Ranking Member Blunt and Members of the Committee for this really productive hearing. This

really gives us an opportunity, and our great staff that together worked to put this on, to figure out what is happening, to get that timeline so we can start planning.

A lot of our colleagues are excited about these additional museums. Also excited about the reopening. You have made it clear, seven days a week coming right up here, and we are very pleased with that. We are going to be able to go back and tell our colleagues, and hopefully I will see you in person at one of your museums very soon. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your great work.

Thank you, Senator Blunt. Do you want to add anything? I know you are going to have some questions on the record.

Senator BLUNT. I do have some questions for the record, and part of those will relate to your backlog. It is something we are interested in. Did not have the time we might have had today, but I have two questions and we will get those for the record. Thank you, Secretary.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Exactly. Maybe what those priorities are and the like. I think we would both like to know that. The hearing record will remain open for one week and we are adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:56 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

## **APPENDIX MATERIAL SUBMITTED**

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**Statement of Lonnie G. Bunch III, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution  
United States Senate  
Committee on Rules and Administration  
March 30, 2022**

Chairwoman Klobuchar, Ranking Member Blunt, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

The past two years have been challenging for the Smithsonian, as they have for people and organizations across the country and throughout the world. I am proud of the ways we have been able to continue serving Americans in this time of need while also following the guidance of the medical experts to ensure the health and safety of our visitors and staff.

The Smithsonian community has been remarkable in its ability to pivot to a more digital institution, enabling us to reach more people who could not visit us in person. Our number of online visitors rose from 153 million in FY 2019 to more than 205 million in FY 2021. And the diligence of our employees allowed us to reopen all our museums, which will soon be open seven days a week. Events necessitated becoming nimbler, more dynamic, and more creative in the ways we serve the public, and our staff rose to the challenge.

As you know, Congress passed the legislation for two new Smithsonian museums, the National Museum of the American Latino and the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum. I am excited to see what they become in the months and years ahead. They present a unique opportunity to blend tradition and innovation, use digital technology in new ways to tell the full American story, and help us serve the greater good by having a profound impact on people's lives.

When I last addressed this committee about the legislation for these new museums, I underscored the need to understand and plan for the obligations they will incur over time. They are each lifetime commitments, increasing our need to identify collections space, undertake maintenance, and address staffing in perpetuity. But I am confident that with the full support of Congress, we will be able to make these museums exemplars. I can report that things are proceeding well as we work to bring both museums to life.

The National Museum of the American Latino's 19-member board of trustees was established in summer 2021. The board held its first meeting virtually in October 2021. The founding director of the Latino museum, Jorge Zamanillo, arrives in May, and a staff of 16 experienced Smithsonian Latino Center veterans has already been assembled.

The Smithsonian American Women's History Museum's 25-member advisory council was established in fall 2021. The council held its first meeting virtually Sept. 20, 2021. It will make recommendations on the location, planning and design of the museum and assist with fundraising. It is being led by interim director Lisa Sasaki, and an executive search firm is progressing in the search for a founding director.



As someone who went through the site selection process with the National Museum of African American History and Culture, I can testify how consequential a museum's location is, both as a symbol and as a driver of success. In choosing the locations for our newest museums, we enlisted a consulting firm to help us develop a strategic approach. We are applying due diligence to all the possible sites, including those enumerated in the museum legislation, and making significant process toward determining the finalists.

Being a positive influence on our communities and on the nation means meeting the high standard we set for ourselves. That requires not just doing good work, but also fostering an environment where everyone is fully respected and welcomed. A series of incidents at our Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute that recently came to light fell far short of that standard, something that appalls me. I am personally offended, and I can assure you that I will not tolerate such behavior. I have dedicated my career to fighting for equality and fair treatment, so I am grateful to the strong and courageous women who came forward and showed us where we need to do better.

We implemented many policy and procedure changes over the past year to make the Smithsonian a model place to work and visit. That includes making significant enhancements to the Smithsonian's anti-harassment resources, reporting processes, and prevention initiatives like the SI Civil Program. We are expanding its staff and increasing its capacity to allow employees to report harassment, violence, or retaliatory behaviors in the workplace. To assess and improve our workplace culture, we need to be able to accurately measure harassment complaints and other issues. The SI Civil Program is putting those tools in place, and the Institution will be more effective and transparent as a result.

Both I and the institutional leadership are determined to create a more inclusive, respectful, and welcoming Smithsonian that lives up to our ideals and embodies our values.

Museums have also undergone a healthy re-examination of objects in our collections and how they were obtained. The National Museum of Natural History and the National Museum of the American Indian have long had robust efforts to repatriate cultural patrimony, but a growing awareness about the often-contested provenance of museum collections led us to examine our own collections more closely. The Smithsonian put together an Ethical Returns Working Group to identify ways to restore the rightful ownership of objects in our collections and increase our repatriation efforts.

When the Smithsonian works with other countries to retrieve and protect their cultural heritage, it is not only the right thing to do, but also in the nation's best interests. The international efforts of the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative are cultural diplomacy in action. When global conflict like that in Ukraine endangers lives and threatens to erase the culture and history of a people, it is vitally important to keep open all channels of dialogue.

To be clear, even though we have continued to serve the public effectively during this difficult time, there are some long-term concerns. Among these are the impact of the new museums, declining revenue during the pandemic, and the need to modernize and secure our systems as our

digital capabilities improve. The President's FY 2023 Budget aims to address some of these challenges and your support and guidance give me great confidence in our future success.

The Smithsonian's mission of the "increase and diffusion of knowledge" is not just a slogan: for 175 years, it has been a covenant with the nation. We are obligated to lead responsibly, guided by ethics and morals, serving in a way that enriches the lives of our neighbors, the American people, and the citizens of the world. With your help, we will be able to do so for another 175 years. Thank you for holding this hearing, for your ongoing support, and for your commitment to working with us to improve our shared future as a nation. I am happy to answer any questions you have.

**Senate Committee on Rules and Administration  
Oversight of the Smithsonian Institution Hearing  
March 30, 2022  
Questions for the Record  
Secretary Bunch**

**Chairwoman Klobuchar**

**During your tenure, the Smithsonian has worked to improve information security – including by addressing all five recommendations from a July 2021 audit report by your Inspector General.**

- **Can you expand on your efforts to continue to improve cybersecurity to protect the Institution against emerging threats?**

The Smithsonian maintains structured plans for its information security program. These plans are continuously updated and re-prioritized to address new requirements, emerging threats, evolving industry practices, recommendations from audits and other assessments, operational lessons learned, and performance metrics. Every year, we set program goals based on these plans and closely track progress throughout the year.

For FY22, major improvement goals include:

- Implementing a Data Loss Prevention solution to prevent leakage of sensitive information
- Continuing to improve our security monitoring and detection capabilities, including expanding use of threat intelligence
- Documenting a Major Cyber Incident Contingency Plan to fully prepare for all business aspects of a major incident (such as an SI-wide ransomware attack).
- Developing procedures for Cyber Supply Chain Risk Management to assess and manage the security risks related to use of third-party systems and IT services (which are a major avenue for cyberattacks)
- Planning and beginning implementation of a Zero Trust Architecture to provide more secure access to systems and data in an increasingly distributed work environment.
- Continuing to evolve and improve the quality of our Security Assessment and Authorization processes, including migrating to version 5 of the NIST security controls, to better manage security risks to our systems.

**In your testimony, you referenced the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative’s efforts to work with other countries to retrieve and protect their cultural heritage against threats posed by global conflicts including the current war in Ukraine.**

- **Can you elaborate on the Institution’s work in this area and why it is important?**

The power of museums, libraries, archives, historical sites, and places of worship is their ability to remember and celebrate a people. Once these touchstones of cultural heritage and identity are

gone, it is as if these people never existed. The Russian invasion has created enormous suffering and loss of life for the people of Ukraine, but it also threatens their national identity. If you destroy uniquely Ukrainian heritage, it becomes easier to argue that Ukraine is really just part of Russia. The loss of heritage can inflict pain on the population for generations and create further barriers to peace.

The Smithsonian created the Haiti Cultural Recovery Project at the request of Haitian colleagues to assist with salvage and stabilization of cultural heritage after the 2010 earthquake. Recognizing the increasing need to respond to cultural heritage after natural and human-caused disasters, the Smithsonian established the Cultural Rescue Initiative (SCRI) in 2012.

Today, SCRI is widely recognized in the U.S. and globally as a leader in emergency preparedness and response for collections. Our strategies focus on:

- Emergency interventions to help salvage and stabilize cultural heritage, buying time for the communities to plan for more advanced conservation when ground conditions allow;
- Better preparedness and response through our international cultural first aid training programs and the resulting cultural first aider networks; and
- Partnerships and collaboration with Smithsonian museums, U.S. inter-agency partners, and international organizations and NGOs.

Activities related to Ukraine include:

- Providing expertise as a member of the Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee, an interagency working group chaired by the Department of State Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs.
- Supporting cultural heritage emergency response in Ukraine through partnerships, including work with the Heritage and Emergency Response Initiative led by former Smithsonian Fellow and cultural first aider Ihor Poshyvailo. HERI is SCRI's local partner for coordination and response. We also coordinate with the Prince Claus Fund Cultural Emergency Response (Netherlands), Polish cultural organizations, and other stakeholders.
- Since 2020, SCRI and the Virginia Museum of Natural History have collaborated on the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab (CHML). The Lab utilizes high resolution satellite imagery and remote sensing to identify destructive events and active threats to heritage and monitor them over time. CHML is monitoring damage to heritage in Ukraine and providing reports to U.S. and Ukraine government colleagues and stakeholders.
- Past Activities for Armed Conflict include:
- Providing regular training and support to the U.S. Army Monument Officers, part of U.S. compliance with Chapter 1, Article 7 of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.
- In 2013, SCRI assisted with assessment and documentation of intentional damage of heritage sites in Mali caused by religious extremist groups.
- Working with the U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield and other organizations, SCRI developed heritage reference guides for U.S. military and coalition personnel engaged in

military operations against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Also provided “no strike” lists of heritage to colleagues at the Department of Defense.

- In 2015, SCRI began helping train Iraqi cultural heritage professionals to respond to intentional damage conducted by ISIS on cultural sites, including the famous archaeological site of Nimrud.
- In 2019, Smithsonian staff conducted the initial assessment and documentation of damage ISIS intentionally carried out at the Mosul Museum and continues to work with Iraqi and international partners on recovery and reopening of the museum.
- After the Beirut blast, SCRI and conservators from the Smithsonian American Art Museum partnered with Blue Shield Lebanon to provide virtual training for securing and stabilizing damaged paintings located in the historic district. Our work with virtual training and consultation for local heritage stewards is on-going.
- SCRI offers research experiences for undergraduate students. SCRI is entering its fourth year as a host for the Virtual Student Federal Service Program. Over one hundred interns have conducted original research through the program.

**At the hearing, you testified about changes that you are working to implement following allegations of sexual harassment at the Smithsonian’s Tropical Research Institute in Panama, including enhanced training and efforts to improve the process for reporting and tracking complaints.**

- **Have you met any obstacles in implementing these changes, and are you committed to continuing to work to prevent and respond swiftly to any improper conduct to ensure all Smithsonian employees are safe and respected?**

We are pleased to report that the entire Smithsonian community has been passionate about implementing the anti-harassment efforts and initiatives I outlined during the hearing. Our main challenge has been ensuring we balance the need for quick implementation with a carefully executed change management strategy. We are continuously engaging employees during this process to build trust and ensure incidents are reported as soon as possible.

I am committed to the continued enhancement of our anti-harassment program, including additional prevention strategies and improved response processes. As I’ve stressed many times recently, maintaining a safe and respectful workplace is a priority for the Smithsonian.

#### Senator Blunt

**Smithsonian Facilities Conditions and Deferred Maintenance Backlog:**

**Secretary Bunch, the last time you were before this Committee to discuss the Smithsonian’s deferred maintenance backlog, we talked about your plan to have the facilities team analyze the backlog building-by-building, rather than simply seeing the totality of the backlog.**

- **Has that building-by-building analysis been completed?**

Yes, we have identified our deferred maintenance amounts by major buildings, and this information is available on our Facility Fact Sheets. We are currently in the process of a new cycle of facility condition assessments and are completing a building-by building analysis, as part of our every 3-year hands on building evaluation. We have completed 6 facilities to date and will complete 7 facilities in total in FY 22, 12 in FY 23 and 15 in FY24. The Smithsonian has facility fact sheets with specific conditions of each building identified which helps guide our maintenance and capital programs.

- **If so, has that analysis improved planning for major projects?**

Yes, the analysis allows us to be better informed about the condition of the facilities (buildings) and how best to prioritize projects. We use this analysis to help prioritize our capital program. The facilities with the most deferred maintenance are revitalized first. This is why the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (HMSG), Smithsonian Institution Building (SIB), National Museum of American History (NMAH) East Wing, and Arts and Industries Building (AIB) are next in our capital plan.

**You and your facilities team agree with industry standards that the Smithsonian should be spending 2-4% of the replacement value of the Smithsonian buildings on maintenance.**

- **How close is the Smithsonian to that 2-4% spending window?**

The Smithsonian's maintenance budget as a percent of CRV, for FY 22, is \$116M which is 1.03%.

- **Can you speak to the Smithsonian's plan to close that gap?**

The Smithsonian's internal planning is targeting an increase of \$15M from FYs 24-27 which will allow us to get closer to 2% CRV. Our planning does not incorporate any increase in construction costs and inflation.

A few weeks ago, the Senate passed the FY 2022 appropriations bill, which provided the Smithsonian with \$210 million in capital revitalization funding.

- **Which projects has the Smithsonian prioritized to address with that funding?**

The Smithsonian has prioritized funding for projects which address life safety, deferred maintenance, risk of damage to collections or mission, and which support active construction contracts.

**Each major revitalization project that the Smithsonian plans, begins, and completes helps to chip away at the deferred maintenance backlog. However, while one museum or facility gets a complete overhaul, others are continuing to age. It appears to be a vicious cycle.**

- **Does the Smithsonian have a longer-term plan to get ahead of this problem?**

Yes, we do. The Smithsonian's long-term plan is consistent, steady annual capital and maintenance program funding that allows us to keep ahead of the curve. By performing Facilities Condition Assessments every three years on site, and with routine coordination among the developing programs of each museum/unit, we are able to develop a comprehensive long-term plan to address deferred maintenance and the necessary facility revitalization around our campus. Priorities can then be decided by our Capital Board lead by the Deputy Secretary, with the final approval of our Secretary. We request funding for our facilities in the worst shape, and this helps drive down our deferred maintenance and improve our reliability.

**When many of us think about the Smithsonian's deferred maintenance backlog we think of the aging museums across Washington, D.C., but I understand that aging storage facilities are also a substantial part of the backlog. In FY 2015, the Smithsonian issued its Collections Space Framework Plan to guide collections space projects.**

- **What progress has been made on the Collection Space Framework Plan's implementation?**

Based on the Collections Space Framework Plan, completed in FY 2015, the Smithsonian has undertaken a strategic approach towards addressing our current and future collections space needs in a pragmatic, pan-Institutional, and integrated manner. Under this plan, we are engaged in an ongoing cycle of planning and constructing state-of-the-art storage facilities, relocating at-risk collections, and revitalizing existing spaces to address current unacceptable space conditions, allow for decompression of overcrowded collections, anticipate future collections growth, and reduce our reliance on leased space. The Framework Plan has already had a major impact by programming and securing funding for critical space improvements at the Paul E. Garber Facility, the Museum Support Center, the Dulles Collections Center, and on the Mall.

Planning efforts to address short and long-term collections space needs have included updates to master plans at American History, American Indian, Air & Space, and Natural History, as well as the completion of the Suitland Collections Center Master Plan in 2020, which serves as a 40-year roadmap for developing a more integrated campus at Suitland.

Near-term Facility Capital projects which will implement the Framework Plan includes:

- complete hazard mitigation and relocation of collections from contaminated conditions in Garber Buildings 15, 16, and 18 into a newly renovated temporary swing space;
- construction of Pod 6 at the Museum Support Center to address the critical need to relocate at-risk collections currently at the Garber Facility, several Mall museums with flood-prone spaces, and the National Gallery of Art. Pod 6 will also provide critical temporary and permanent collections space for American History's West Wing Public Space Renewal Project;
- design and construction of Module 2 and a hangar adjacent to the Udvar-Hazy Center, following construction of Module 1, to support the continued move of Air & Space collections from substandard conditions at the Garber Facility and potentially provide swing space for HMSG Revitalization project and the two new museums; and

- completion of the Dulles Collections Center Master Plan.

In addition, we continue to strategically direct central collections care resources to purchase new storage equipment across the Smithsonian to replace substandard equipment, which minimizes physical, environmental, and security risks to collections, improves collections accessibility, and corrects unacceptable collections space conditions where equipment is the primary deficiency factor placing collections at risk.

**How will the two newest Smithsonian museums, the National Museum of the American Latino and the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum, impact the Smithsonian's collections storage needs?**

Collection-related pan-Institutional projects fulfill the mission to preserve artifacts, specimens, artworks, archives, and libraries. These prioritized Federal pan-Institutional capital projects are inter-related and essential for collection stewardship. Design and construction of Dulles Collection Center Module 2 (currently scheduled for construction in FY25) is identified in the Collections Space Framework Plan as a key step in providing swing space for pan-SI artifacts out of Garber and implementation of the Suitland Master Plan. Without these facilities, approx. 30,000 collections will continue to be stored in substandard Garber buildings, degrading at a high rate. These facilities will support swing space for other renovations on the Mall and interim collections storage for the two new museums. Permanent collections storage space needs for the new museums will be determined in the coming years as detailed planning and space programming is initiated.

- **How can the Smithsonian ensure that the two new museums the Congress authorized in 2020 do not exacerbate the Smithsonian's existing facilities challenges?**

The capital program must continue to receive funding for revitalization to replace building systems when they reach the end of their anticipated useful life. Furthermore, funding for new construction at the Smithsonian must be in addition to funding for revitalization. Finally, funding for the two new museums must also include sufficient funding to house and manage collections for each of the new museums.

**National Museum of the American Latino and Smithsonian American Women's History Museum:**

**I understand that the Smithsonian is in the middle of its year-long search for the future sites of the National Museum of the American Latino and the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum.**

- **What does that process look like and what factors do the Board of Regents and the site selection team consider?**



The enabling legislation directs the Smithsonian’s Board of Regents to select sites for the two new museums on or near the National Mall, to the maximum extent practicable, by the end of this year. The list of sites to be considered was drawn from the enabling legislation and Presidential and Congressional Commission reports for the two museums. Consultation is required with a number of key stakeholders and external review entities. The legislation requires that heads of agencies with jurisdiction concur with the decision to transfer a site and further specifies that the museums shall not be located in the “Reserve,” which is an open space on the National Mall under U.S. Park Service jurisdiction. Two of the sites under review are located in the Reserve and, if selected, would require further coordination on this point. The Smithsonian has commissioned an architecture and planning consultant to assist in the analysis of sites. The consultant team will develop a high-level architectural program to test the capacity of the sites to accommodate building area and opportunities for exterior landscape and activities.

Sites are being evaluated according to how well they fulfill six basic criteria and sub-criteria:

- Location – proximity to Mall, prominence, visitation potential
- Cost Factors – extent of demolition/site preparation, complexity, timeframe
- Existing Site Conditions – site area, program opportunities, security risks
- Transportation and Access – proximity to transit, walkability, service access
- Environmental Conditions – flood vulnerability, air quality, noise levels
- Acquisition Potential – challenges in acquiring the site

Outreach is being conducted with stakeholders to inform the evaluation process. Nine focus groups were held in late Fall, and a wider national survey was conducted, and results are being analyzed for use in the weighting of criteria. The Smithsonian initially identified 26 potential sites for analysis, of which fourteen sites have been designated as “Tier 1” locations, deemed most likely to fulfill the basic requirements for the new museums. These sites, plus one recent addition, are receiving more detailed review by Smithsonian’s consultant.

**Secretary Bunch, can you give the Committee a fundraising update for both the National Museum of the American Latino and the Smithsonian American Women’s History Museum?**

- **What is the typical timeline for fundraising for a new Smithsonian museum?**

We anticipate that fundraising for the new museums will follow the timeline of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. We will fundraise right up to the opening, leveraging key project milestones, such as site selection, design competition and groundbreaking, to engage donors. We learned that donor interest lined up with the progress of construction, and we will be building up for that.

- **Are the current fundraising efforts on track?**

Yes. While we are currently recruiting key fundraising staff and putting in place the membership programs, our Office of Advancement is focused on engaging key lead donors. We have already secured several early gifts, which will be announced soon.

**Fortunately for the Smithsonian, Secretary Bunch, you have first-hand knowledge of building a new museum from start to finish and know the ins and outs and difficulties that come with this years-long process. Now, however, the Smithsonian is tasked with building two museums at once.**

- **What challenges does this create?**

The Smithsonian has a tremendous opportunity with these two new museums to help elevate the public's understanding of American history through the perspectives of women's history and Latino history. We are eager to move forward with the creation of these museums which both will add greatly to the content we provide to not just Americans but to the world.

There are complexities in building two new museums at once, from site selection to hiring talent to building collections. We are looking at these complexities as opportunities to showcase the power and promise of both these new museums.

- **What can be done to mitigate these challenges?**

The support that we are seeing for both new museums is very encouraging. The interest in Congress is mirrored by that of the new board members, the Smithsonian staff, and the general public.

We are exploring how, in these early stages of development, economies of scale are helping us: this includes one site selection process for both sites, rather than two separate ones, a coordinated effort to identify the initial board members, and creating an initial shared fundraising support team to help both museums.

We also plan to deliver virtual content to the public by leveraging new technologies in new ways long before the museum facilities themselves are open. This is part of our overall transformation of the Smithsonian's digital presence.

The entire Smithsonian is coming together to find creative and cost-effective methods to create both new museums.

**The Smithsonian's Five-Year Strategic Plan:**

**The Smithsonian is currently in the last year of its five-year strategic plan, which is comprised of seven ambitious goals:**

1. **Be One Smithsonian.**
2. **Catalyze new conversations and address complex challenges.**
3. **Reach 1 billion people a year with a digital-first strategy.**
4. **Understand and impact 21<sup>st</sup> century audiences.**
5. **Drive Large, visionary, interdisciplinary research and scholarly projects**
6. **Preserve natural and cultural heritage while optimizing our assets.**
7. **Provide a nimble, cost-effective, and responsive administrative infrastructure.**

- **What progress has been made on these seven goals of the strategic plan since you became Secretary?**

Since I became Secretary in June 2019, the Smithsonian has made significant progress on our strategic plan, focusing on our reach, relevance, and impact.

Early in my tenure, I focused the abovementioned goals above on my five main cross-cutting priority areas:

- Digital: Ensure every home and classroom has access to the Smithsonian's digital content
- Nimble: Work together to build a nimble and more effective Smithsonian.
- Trusted Source: Be a trusted source that explores and grapples with what it means to be an American.
- Science: Harness Smithsonian expertise to elevate science in the global discourse.
- Education: Building and enrich a national culture of learning by engaging with educational systems nationwide.

The five priority areas cover aspects of all seven goals as shown in the matrix provided for the record. We have built out 25 pan-Institutional initiatives, also provided for the record, to address all seven goals and five priority areas. These initiatives are currently underway, and we are resourcing and tracking their progress over the course of at least the next 2 years.

- **What work remains in the plan's final year?**

I intend to extend the existing strategic plan for the immediate future so that we can continue to realize my five priority areas and the 25 initiatives underway.

- **With less than a year remaining in the current strategic plan, can you speak to the direction of the Smithsonian's next strategic plan?**

I intend to extend the existing strategic plan for the immediate future so that we can continue to realize my five priority areas and the 25 initiatives underway.

- **Secretary Bunch, how was the strategic plan helpful in transitioning the Smithsonian to a remote environment at the start of the pandemic?**

The strategic plan had already provided us with a framework for providing enhanced digital and virtual services to Americans. Specifically, the goals on a digital-first strategy, understanding audiences, being one Smithsonian, and being nimble led us to create the building blocks for what would become some of our greatest successes in transitioning to a remote environment, including not just adapting our systems to teleworking for staff, but also our ability to provide Smithsonian content virtually to educators, parents and students at a time when online content was greatly needed.