



We're Thrilled! Commission Makes Recommendations for Women's History Museum

By: Jan Erickson, NOW Government Relations Director
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It was a happy bipartisan crowd at the Capitol on Wednesday, November 16, when an announcement women's history fans have been waiting for was made. Following a two-year study, a bipartisan congressional commission released a lengthy report recommending the establishment of an American Museum of Women's History in Washington, D.C. The eight-member commission concluded that such a museum was needed and that it should become part of the Smithsonian Institute which will provide it with many strategic advantages, including the Smithsonian's brand, reputation and governance structure. Additionally, the museum would be a public-private partnership, able to draw both federal funding and private donations. The museum should be free of charge to the public.

The commission report also recommended that the museum should be located on or near the National Mall, in either newly constructed building or use of an existing structure. Three sites were identified: one near the Washington Monument on the southern edge of the Mall, the second near the National Gallery of Art, and the third in the old Arts and Industries Building located near the Smithsonian "castle." The museum is proposed on a modest scale of 75,000 to 90,000 feet and estimated to cost \$150 to \$180 million, which would be raised from private donors. A ten-year timeline is anticipated for planning, site selection, construction or renovation, collections acquisition and the many other critical steps necessary in the creation of an important museum.

Reflects NOW's Concerns - The commission's major recommendations reflect important points of NOW's position regarding the women's history museum – specifically, that it be part of the Smithsonian system and funded, at least in part, by the federal government as are all other Smithsonian museums. The enabling legislation, passed by a Republican-controlled Congress, had stipulated that no federal funds would be required – a constraint that would have doomed a high-quality, well-supported museum.

The commission's work was supported by \$1 million in donations and in-kind services from the National Women's History Museum, [a virtual museum](#), which began the campaign for a national museum 20 years ago.

Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-MY) who has been a tireless advocate for this cause over many years and sponsored the original enabling legislation was present at the reception in the Capitol, as was Senate sponsor Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) along with many other members of Congress and commission members.

The commission submitted a [report](#) to the President and Congress with recommendations for the American Museum of Women's History.

You can see a photo of the commission members and read more about the commission's report at, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2016/11/16/congressional-panel-calls-for-new-smithsonian-museum-of-womens-history/>

Also, there is a good article on Smithsonian.com, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/why-congressional-commission-wants-national-womens-history-museum-180961156/>