**Museums Advocacy Day 2017**

**Publicity Toolkit**

**Charitable Giving Op-Ed**

The citizens of [name of city or town] are extraordinarily generous. Throughout town, people donate to the causes that they care about, such as [name 2-3 prominent local charities]. As [position] of the [name of museum], I can say that my institution has benefitted profoundly from the generosity of our community, and for that we are sincerely grateful.

Americans give to support causes we believe in, to help those in need of a boost, and simply because it is the right thing to do. This is a hallmark American quality, and seems to be in the country’s DNA. Each year, Americans give more than $350 billion to nonprofits and charitable organizations, including hospitals, universities, social service agencies, funds benefitting police and firefighters and, I’m proud to say, museums. No other country in the world is so generous.

Museums and other nonprofits provide vital community services, in education, health, nutrition and more. These days, more than ever before, museums and charities are filling gaps created by shrinking state, county and municipal budgets. Data shows that for every $1 donors save on taxes, communities see $2.50 in benefits. It’s unlikely that government at any level could find a more efficient way to leverage private investment in community services.

But there are proposals being discussed in Congress today that threaten this American tradition of helping worthy causes. In fact, members of both parties have proposed reducing the deductibility of charitable donations in recent years. Recent analysis by the American Enterprise Institute found that the overall cap on deductions proposed by President Trump during his campaign would eliminate more than $17 billion in annual giving. While that may just be an estimate, it’s clear that our nation’s nonprofits and those who depend on them can’t afford to gamble with the charitable deduction.

Right here in [name of city or town], the [name of museum] uses the generous donations of the community to [list services or programs]. Nationally, the typical museum derives one-third of its revenue from contributions. Here at the [name of museum], fully [XX%] of our revenues come from the generosity of our neighbors and local businesses and foundations.

That’s why 300 of my museum colleagues are going to Washington D.C. on February 28 to meet with members of Congress and their staffs, to tell them what charitable giving means for our institutions and our communities. Simply, it is our lifeblood, and the generosity of spirit found in [name of city or town] is a big part of what makes this such a great place to live.

You can add your voice to our chorus and tell Congress not to reduce the deductibility of charitable contributions. Visit the American Alliance of Museums website ([www.aam-us.org](http://www.aam-us.org)), click on Advocacy, and there you will find tools to make your voice heard on this issue on Capitol Hill.

At a time when families are strained, when education is the key to our nation’s international competitiveness, and when local governments are struggling to meet basic needs, we should encourage those who can to give more, not less.