

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Thursday, September 11, 2008
Press Office, 202-226-0853

**Chairwoman McCarthy Statement at Subcommittee Hearing On
“Examining the Role of Museums and Libraries in Strengthening
Communities”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities, for a subcommittee hearing on “Examining the Role of Museums and Libraries in Strengthening Communities.”*

I want to begin this hearing by recognizing this important day in American history. September 11, 2001 changed the life of each citizen and the course of our nation. We have not forgotten nor will we forget the lives lost on that day. We extend our deep gratitude to the first responders who sacrificed their health and their lives to help the victims that day. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families and friends who lost loved ones in New York, Pennsylvania, and at the Pentagon. Please join me for a moment of silence in remembrance of our fallen citizens.

Thank you.

I'd like to welcome everyone to this hearing. As another school year gets underway and, this hearing is of particular importance. Libraries and museums contribute to the health and welfare of a community year round.

This summer, many of us visited a museum while on vacation or spent more time in our local library with our children getting books or participating in programs, This fall, many teachers will engage in museum-based professional development and students will attend museum programs and libraries that are filled with both teachers and students busy with school work and research.

I wanted to hold this hearing now because it is a good time for Members of Congress to examine the role that both libraries and museums play in strengthening our communities.

Libraries not only provide vast amount of knowledge readily available to the community for free, but they also serve as locations for groups to meet and for people to connect to the internet. Community members can also attend workshops and programs addressing everything from cake decorating to workforce development and professional education.

Libraries are safe places for kids to go after school and on the weekends, and serve as a place where generations can gather and learn from each other.

Museums serve the community in similar ways. Museums are diverse in subject and form, and contribute to communities by collecting, interpreting, and preserving items and ideas important to this country and the world. Museums engage visitors and ignite the imagination of young and old alike. Part of the charge of a museum is to store and preserve its collection for future generations to explore first-hand the world of today, and of our past. As with all institutions, libraries and museums evolve over time.

For example, what were once card catalogues are now computer databases searchable from home on the Internet. The needs of our communities are also changing, and thus the role of libraries and museums must change to serve and strengthen the community in which it resides. In fact, many libraries and museums have seen communities expand through the use of the internet. Thus, libraries and museum need to be innovative in the ways of serving the community in which a library or a museum resides as a fellow citizen and community member.

Today we will learn of innovative, creative activities undertaken by libraries and museums to serve communities as well as to participate in addressing community needs and challenges.

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