

Statement of Interior Appropriations Committee  
Chairman Mike Simpson  
Smithsonian Institution FY13 Budget Hearing  
March 20, 2012

Good morning, Dr. Clough. We appreciate you joining us this morning to share your vision for the future of the Smithsonian and to discuss your budget request for next year. Of course, we always look forward to your testimony. The Members and staff also enjoy the fact that you bring items each year for “show and tell”! There’s no question that you have one of the most interesting jobs in town. I’m pretty sure that everyone around this table would love to trade places with you for a day or a week. However, that probably wouldn’t be a very good thing for the Smithsonian . . .

At the outset, I want to commend you for the Smithsonian’s efforts to improve the display and storage of your vast collections which I understand now contains over 137 million objects. The preservation and care of these collections remains a high priority of this Committee and this Congress. I’m pleased to see that your budget request reflects this concern.

The Smithsonian had one of the largest funding increases out of all of the accounts in our bill last year—roughly seven percent—during a year when the overall funding in our bill was reduced. So, in other words, your gain was another agency’s loss. The funding increase we provided was largely for the construction of the Museum of African American History and Culture. I understand that ground was broken on this new museum just last month and our subcommittee looks forward to getting an update on its progress.

Your budget request for FY13, again, includes a significant funding increase. Part of this increase is devoted to the construction of the new Museum of African American History and Culture, as well as the exhibits that will be on display when it opens its doors. Another sizeable increase in the budget request is for repairs to Smithsonian facilities damaged in last year’s earthquake. While this subcommittee remains a strong supporter of the Smithsonian, providing yet another large funding increase next year is likely to prove very challenging in the present budget climate.

Of course, we’ll do our very best to address the most urgent priorities of the Smithsonian in this era of shrinking budgets. Having you outline the Smithsonian’s budget priorities is a part of that process. If we can’t provide all of the funding you’re requesting for the new museum and for the earthquake repairs next year, what items would you defer? These are tough—but necessary—questions that our subcommittee must address in this budget climate. I look forward to your testimony and continuing our work together.

I’m now happy to yield to the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Moran, for any opening remarks he’d like to make.