



ROY BLUNT *of* MISSOURI, CHAIRMAN

Chairman Blunt's Opening Statement Annual Oversight of the Smithsonian Institution

Congress established the Smithsonian Institution in 1846 through a bequest by British scientist James Smithson, who generously left his estate to the United States to found “an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge.” Almost 175 years later, the Smithsonian is now the world’s largest complex of 19 museums and galleries, numerous global research and educational facilities, the National Zoo, and a growing collection of 155 million objects and specimens.

Dr. Skorton, the 13th Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, has guided the Smithsonian through several important milestones, including the 2016 opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture and a successful fundraising campaign that raised nearly \$2 billion. He has also started implementation of a strategic plan for the institution, an issue that I hope to discuss further this morning. Regretfully, after four years of service, Dr. Skorton will be leaving his post in mid-June. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank him for his service.

In order for the Smithsonian to continue to carry out its charge to be “an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge”, there are challenges that must be meaningfully addressed, including aging facilities and a \$937 million deferred maintenance backlog.

Additionally, the Smithsonian lacks storage space for its continuously growing collections.

Finally, the Smithsonian, like many other federal agencies, also needs to strengthen and secure its information technology infrastructure.

I look forward to discussing Dr. Skorton’s accomplishments as well as the current challenges facing the Smithsonian Institution.