

# MINUTES OF THE APRIL 7, 2025, MEETING OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS

## ATTENDANCE

This scheduled meeting of the Board of Regents (“Board”) of the Smithsonian Institution (“Smithsonian”) was held on Monday, April 7, 2025. The Board conducted its annual strategic meeting, which included special morning programming focused on science and an afternoon business meeting at the National Museum of Natural History (“NMNH”) in Washington, D.C. Present were Regents:

Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., Chancellor<sup>1</sup>  
Senator John Boozman  
Senator Catherine Cortez Masto  
Senator Gary Peters  
Representative Carlos Giménez  
Representative Doris Matsui  
Representative Adrian Smith  
Ambassador Barbara M. Barrett

Ms. Toni Bush  
Mr. John Fahey  
Mr. Roger W. Ferguson, Jr.  
Mr. Michael Govan  
Dr. Risa J. Lavizzo-Mourey, Chair  
Mr. Michael M. Lynton  
Ms. Denise O’Leary  
Mr. Franklin D. Raines, Vice Chair

Mr. Jose Minaya, Investment Committee Chair  
Mr. Jorge Puente, Smithsonian National Board Chair  
Mrs. Christine Udvar-Hazy, Advancement Committee Chair

Vice President JD Vance was unable to attend the meeting.

Smithsonian and Regent staff present by invitation of the Board were:

Lonnie G. Bunch III, Secretary  
Nicole L. Angarella, Inspector General  
Greg Bettwy, Chief of Staff to the Secretary  
Anne Brachman, Director of the Office of Government Relations  
Steve Canty, Research Ecologist, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center<sup>2</sup>  
Monique Chism, Under Secretary for Education  
Cari Corrigan, Research Geologist and Curator of Meteorites, National Museum of Natural History<sup>2</sup>  
Ronald Cortez, Under Secretary for Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer  
Carla Dove, Program Director, Feather Identification Laboratory, National Museum of Natural History<sup>2</sup>  
Robert M. Dow, Jr., Counselor to the Chief Justice  
Kate Forester, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Regents  
Cecilia Garraffo, Director of AstroAI and EarthAI Institutes, Center for Astrophysics | Harvard & Smithsonian<sup>3</sup>

Madison Hardimon, Office of Representative Giménez  
Josh Jackson, Office of Representative Smith  
Jeremy Marcus, Office of Representative Matsui  
Julissa Marengo, Assistant Secretary for Communications and External Affairs and Chief Marketing Officer  
Jennifer McIntyre, Chief Legal Officer  
Meroë Park, Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer  
Jared Stabach, Research Ecologist and Terrestrial Lead, Movement of Life, National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute<sup>2</sup>  
Caitlyn Stephenson, Office of Senator Peters  
Rob Spiller, Assistant Secretary for Advancement  
Ellen Stofan, Under Secretary for Science and Research  
Porter N. Wilkinson, Counselor and Chief of Staff to the Regents  
Josh Yearsley, Office of Senator Cortez Masto

<sup>1</sup> Participated in the afternoon business meeting

<sup>2</sup> Participated in the morning science program

<sup>3</sup> Participated in the lunch program

# MORNING SESSION

## SCIENCE AT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

### Welcome and Introduction of Science at the Smithsonian Institution

The Regents' strategic meeting on April 7, 2025, offered a deep dive into Smithsonian science and research and explored what sets the Institution's work apart from other government agencies and science and research organizations across the globe. The program began with an informal breakfast and welcome from Secretary Lonnie Bunch and Under Secretary for Science and Research Ellen Stofan. Secretary Bunch and Dr. Stofan provided an overview of the Smithsonian's scientific contributions and set the stage for a deeper exploration of cutting-edge research conducted by Smithsonian scientists.

## FROM COASTAL SHORES TO COSMIC FRONTIERS: SCIENCE FOR A SUSTAINABLE PLANET

### Science Spotlights

Following the overview, Regents, directors, and Smithsonian leadership, convened for the start of the formal program, which began with three TED-style talks featuring the Smithsonian's leading scientists, researchers, and innovators. These individuals shared breakthrough ideas and personal stories about their work, exploring topics ranging from ocean conservation and climate resilience to renewable technologies and space exploration. The first research spotlight featured Steve Canty, Research Ecologist at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center. Dr. Canty shared insights into wetlands conservation, highlighting his work integrating ecological and social sciences to support decision-making in marine resource management. Next, the Board had an opportunity to hear from Jared Stabach, Research Ecologist at the National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute. Dr. Stabach presented on the Movement of Life Initiative, highlighting the importance of animal movement in ecosystem connectivity, migration, and carbon cycling. To conclude the TED-style talks, Cari Corrigan, Research Geologist at the National Museum of Natural History, provided an overview of the study of extraterrestrial samples, particularly from the asteroid Bennu, which was brought back from space on NASA's OSIRIS-REx mission.

## HOW TECHNOLOGY AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF SCIENCE

### Panel Discussion

Following the research spotlights, the three scholars engaged in a panel discussion with Dr. Stofan, focusing on how advancements in technology and artificial intelligence ("AI") are transforming research and discovery in their respective fields of ecology, conservation biology, and geology. Dr. Canty, explained how AI can improve mapping and monitoring of coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass, providing better predictions of ecosystem changes and enhancing citizen science integration. Dr. Stabach discussed how AI yields faster insights into

animal movements, automates species ID from images, and improves conservation planning through AI-analyzed habitat data. Dr. Corrigan highlighted how AI produces more accurate meteorite classification, giving a better understanding of planetary geology and smarter targeting of meteorite collection sites in Antarctica. For all three scientists and their colleagues, AI is accelerating data analysis and reducing analysis time, increasing precision and accuracy, enabling real-time monitoring, modeling complex systems, expanding the scope of research with limited resources, and driving innovation across disciplines.

## TOUR: FEATHER IDENTIFICATION LAB

### Tour of the Feather Identification Lab

Next, the Regents had an opportunity to tour the Feather Identification Lab at the National Museum of Natural History, a highly specialized lab that studies avian collisions with aircraft. The tour was led by Carla Dove, Program Manager of the Feather Identification Lab. Dr. Dove described how the lab, which is the only full-time bird-strike identification lab in the world, processes more than 10,000 civil and military wildlife airstrike cases annually. Regents had an opportunity to explore how the Feather Identification Lab specializes in identifying bird species from feathers to support wildlife conservation, aviation safety, and law enforcement investigations worldwide.

Following the tour, the Board adjourned to the luncheon program at approximately 11:30 a.m.

## LUNCH: THE AI DISCOVERY REVOLUTION IN ASTROPHYSICS

### Luncheon Program: The AI Discovery Revolution in Astrophysics

During lunch, the Regents heard from Dr. Cecilia Garraffo, the founding director of the AstroAI and EarthAI Institutes at the Center for Astrophysics | Harvard & Smithsonian. Dr. Garraffo led a discussion on AstroAI, a new center launched in 2023 by the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory. The Board engaged in a conversation focused on how the Smithsonian is developing responsible AI practices and showcased ways AstroAI is bringing experts in artificial intelligence together with scientists to tackle the most exciting and challenging problems in astrophysics.

## AFTERNOON SESSION

The Chancellor called the afternoon session to order at approximately 1:00 p.m. and reviewed the remainder of the Board's business agenda.

## REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### Regent and Committee Member Transitions

To begin her report, Board and Executive Committee Chair Risa J. Lavizzo-Mourey welcomed Congressional Regent Representative Carlos Antonio Giménez of Florida and his Smithsonian Liaison Madison Hardimon to their first meeting of

the Board of Regents. Dr. Lavizzo-Mourey also acknowledged the first Regents' meeting for Jose Minaya, Chair of the Investment Committee.

**Senior Staff Transitions**

Dr. Lavizzo-Mourey then introduced the Smithsonian's new Director of the Office of Government Relations Anne Brachman, who began on March 24, 2025.

**Recognition of Departing Director**

Next, Dr. Lavizzo-Mourey presented one action item for the Board's consideration, the proposed award of the Joseph Henry Medal to departing Smithsonian Environmental Research Center Director Anson "Tuck" Hines. The Joseph Henry Medal was established in 1967 and is given by resolution of the Board of Regents to individuals in recognition of their distinguished service, achievements, or contributions to the prestige and growth of the Smithsonian Institution. It was noted this award will be kept confidential until it is presented to Dr. Hines in June. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Board voted to approve the proposed recognition.

**See attached Actions 2025.04.01** (*Minutes of the Board of Regents, Appendix A*).

**Executive Committee Approvals**

To conclude, Dr. Lavizzo-Mourey noted there were no motions approved by the Executive Committee on behalf of the full Board between the January and April Board meetings.

## APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

**Consent Agenda**

The Consent Agenda ("Agenda") was presented for the Board's approval. Action items listed on the April 7, 2025, Agenda included: the approval of minutes from the January 27, 2025, Regents' meeting and the appointment and reappointment of candidates to 11 Smithsonian Advisory Boards. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Board voted to adopt the Agenda, constituting the approval of all action items listed therein.

**See attached Actions 2025.04.02** (*Minutes of the Board of Regents, Appendix A*).

## QUESTIONS ON WRITTEN COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Questions on Written Committee Reports**

Next, Dr. Lavizzo-Mourey provided an opportunity for Regent committee chairs and Smithsonian staff to answer questions on the written reports distributed in advance of the meeting by the Facilities Committee, Governance and Nominating Committee, Investment Committee, Smithsonian National Board, and Office of Government Relations.

### *Written Report of the Facilities Committee*

#### **Written Report of the Facilities Committee**

The Facilities Committee held a meeting on March 12, 2025. During the meeting, the Committee received an update on Smithsonian real estate, was briefed on building transitions at the National Postal Museum and reviewed the status of three ongoing capital projects: Smithsonian Castle, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and Pod 6 Collections Storage Facility. The Committee also discussed future operational costs for potential donor-funded construction projects.

### *Written Report of the Governance and Nominating Committee*

#### **Written Report of the Governance and Nominating Committee**

The Governance and Nominating Committee met on March 13, 2025. During the meeting, the Committee discussed the search for four citizen Regents to fill the vacancies of Board members whose terms expire in 2026. This item was presented during the Board's Executive Session. The Committee also voted on appointments and reappointments to the Smithsonian advisory boards. These motions were provided under the Consent Agenda. Additionally, the Committee reviewed proposed deaccessions from the collections of the National Museum of Asian Art ("NMAA") Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. Both cases met the criteria for deaccessioning established by the Smithsonian's Collections Management Policy. Details of the NMAA deaccessions will remain confidential until publicly announced. The Committee also received an update on the exhibition calendar detailing the status or opening information for exhibitions and was briefed on one Smithsonian Directive 603 review.

### *Written Report of the Investment Committee*

#### **Written Report of the Investment Committee**

The Investment Committee met on March 18, 2025. During the meeting, the Office of Investments led the Committee's annual review of the Endowment's portfolio covering the portfolio review, asset class review, asset allocation, and portfolio implementation. The Smithsonian Endowment's one-year return as of December 31, 2024, was 7.8% versus 7.7% for the policy benchmark.

### *Written Report of the Smithsonian National Board*

#### **Written Report of the Smithsonian National Board**

The Smithsonian National Board ("SNB") held its winter business meeting virtually on March 4, 2025. The meeting focused on Institution-wide updates from Secretary Bunch, fundraising progress, and a brief recap of the SNB's January experience in Panama. National Board members also learned about the Office of Global Affairs' strategic priorities and received reports from working group and committee chairs.

## *Written Report of the Office of Government Relations*

### **Written Report of the Office of Government Relations**

The Office of Government Relations (“OGR”) reported that the House and Senate passed a Continuing Resolution (“CR”), which was signed into law by President Trump on March 15, 2025, and funds the government at FY 2024 levels through September 30, 2025, the end of fiscal year 2025.

### **Congressional Engagement**

Between the January and April meetings, the Smithsonian co-hosted two events for Members of Congress. OGR partnered with Smithsonian Gardens and the United States Botanic Garden to host a Congressional Open House on February 26, 2025, as part of the *Orchids: Masters of Deception* showcase, which took place at the United States Botanic Garden Conservatory. Additionally, the Office of Government Relations and the Smithsonian American Women’s History Museum Advisory Council worked with Representative Nicole Malliotakis to host a reception for Members of Congress in the U.S. Capitol Building, marking the start of Women’s History Month in March.

### **Congressional Briefings and Smithsonian Related Legislation**

The Office of Government Relations also continues hosting and participating in a variety of Congressional hearings, briefings, programs, and events. On March 12, OGR organized an oversight briefing for staff of the House Administration and Senate Rules Committees on the status of Smithsonian Facilities. The Office of Government Relations also coordinated a series of meetings with the National Museum of the American Latino’s Board of Trustees, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Hispanic Conference. OGR has also been tracking legislation related to the Smithsonian, including legislation to permit the two new Smithsonian museums to be located within the Reserve of the National Mall, and the Commission to Study the Potential of a National Museum of Italian American History and Culture Act.

## **STRATEGIC DISCUSSION: SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION BUDGET**

### **Smithsonian Institution Budget**

Secretary Bunch then led a discussion on the Smithsonian’s financial position, including an update on the status of the federal appropriation. As part of the discussion, the Secretary provided an overview of the Institution’s financial outlook as it prepares for potential sustained decreases in federal funding.

### **Federal Budget**

The Secretary first briefed the Regents on the federal budget. The Institution is currently operating under Continuing Resolution (“CR”), which funds the Smithsonian at fiscal year 2024 levels through the end of fiscal year 2025. The Smithsonian received a total of \$1,090.5 million, which includes \$892.9 million for Salaries and Expenses and \$197.6 million for Facilities Capital. Secretary Bunch noted that the flat-lined budget from FY 2024 did require some reductions due to the cost increases in salaries and expenses. The Smithsonian is also planning for significant potential reductions for fiscal year 2026 funding, as part of broader federal budget adjustments impacting various agencies, departments and federally funded organizations like the Smithsonian. Budget planning scenarios are being developed based on guidance from the Office of Management

and Budget (“OMB”) to mitigate the impacts across museums, research centers, education programs, and initiatives. The Secretary emphasized that the Smithsonian is continuing to seek additional funding from private sources and revenue-generating activities to support its operations and strategic priorities.

**Trust Budget: Revenue  
Generating Activities**

Under Secretary for Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer Ron Cortez then briefed the Regents on the Trust budget and expenditures, including a review of cash management and revenue-generating activities. Mr. Cortez pointed out that the Central Trust cumulative deficit was eliminated in fiscal year 2024. This is the first time in four years the Central Trust cumulative deficit has ended the fiscal year with a net positive position, and further improvements are expected in fiscal year 2025. In addition, Smithsonian Enterprises’ financial performance for FY 2022 to FY 2025 has seen year-over-year growth in net revenue, net gain, and net gain distribution. Mr. Cortez also emphasized that the Smithsonian ended fiscal year 2024 in a strong Endowment and cash position, attributed to short-term and mid-term investment earnings.

**Trust Budget:  
Fundraising**

To conclude, Assistant Secretary for Advancement Rob Spiller updated the Board on fundraising progress and plans, which will be essential to offset any sustained reductions in federal funding. Mr. Spiller informed the Board that the Smithsonian has raised \$230 million towards its \$315 million goal in fiscal year 2025. Campaign fundraising also continues to be strong as the Institution works to reach the \$2.5 billion Campaign goal. It was noted the Campaign is anticipated to conclude in 2026 in conjunction with the 250th anniversary of the United States. Mr. Spiller informed the Board that the Office of Advancement will be focusing on endowment fundraising and emphasizing strategic priorities that will appeal to a broad audience.

## REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

**Report of the Secretary**

Secretary Bunch then updated the Board on the state of the Smithsonian. He began his report by offering an update on Human Remains in the Smithsonian collection. The Smithsonian is developing plans to inter the unidentified remains appropriately, including memorializing the individuals. The Institution is also continuing to conduct research on the provenance of individual human remains through partnerships with Howard University and Washington University.

**Arabian Leopards**

The Secretary then informed the Board that the Smithsonian is continuing discussions with representatives from AlUla, Saudi Arabia’s first UNESCO World Heritage Site, about developing a conservation program for Arabian leopards at the National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute. A proposed funding strategy to construct, operate, and maintain a state-of-the-art public exhibit is being developed.

**Smithsonian New  
Museums Related  
Legislation**

The Secretary concluded his report with an update on H.R. 1329, To permit the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum to be located within the Reserve of the National Mall, and H.R. 1330, To permit the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Latino to be located within the Reserve of the National Mall. Both bills were introduced on February 13, 2025. Secretary Bunch shared that the Senate has also recently introduced bills to site the new museums on the National Mall, citing the same language as the House bills. The Secretary will keep the Board apprised of any actions taken on the House or Senate bills.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION: REGENTS ONLY**

**Executive Session:  
New Regent Search**

The Board moved into a Regents-only executive session at approximately 1:50 p.m. Chair of the Governance and Nominating Committee Roger Ferguson led a discussion on the search for four citizen Regents to fill the vacancies of members of the Smithsonian Board of Regents whose terms expire in 2026.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION: REGENTS AND SECRETARY**

**Executive Session:  
Regents and Secretary**

The Board then continued its deliberations in an executive session with the Secretary. Secretary Bunch gave an update on the progress of personnel searches for vacant senior-level positions and briefed the Board on the current Smithsonian operating environment.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION: "GATEKEEPER" REPORTS**

**Executive Session:  
"Gatekeeper" Reports**

The Board concluded the April 7, 2025, meeting with an opportunity to hear from each of the Smithsonian's Gatekeepers, including the Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer, Under Secretary for Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer, Chief Legal Officer, and Inspector General.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at approximately 3:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lonnie G. Bunch, III  
Secretary

## APPENDIX A: ACTIONS OF THE APRIL 7, 2025, MEETING OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS

**VOTED** that the Board of Regents presents to Anson “Tuck” Hines the Joseph Henry Medal in recognition of his manifold contributions to the Smithsonian Institution as the Director of the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center. [2025.04.01]

**VOTED** that the Board of Regents adopts the Consent Agenda, which constitutes the approval of all action items listed therein. [2025.04.02]

**VOTED** that the Board of Regents approves the minutes of the January 27, 2025, meeting of the Board of Regents.

**VOTED** that the Board of Regents approves the proposed slate of candidates for appointment or reappointment to 11 Smithsonian Institution Advisory Boards.