

**House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education  
February 16, 2017**

**Testimony of Christie Weininger, Executive Director, Hayes Presidential Library & Museums**

Our Centennial Anniversary, which occurred in 2016, was the catalyst for transformational change at the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library & Museums at Spiegel Grove, in Fremont, Ohio.

- Our core exhibits, which had enjoyed a longer-than-intended life of nearly 50 years (most museums overhaul their core exhibits every 10 to 15 years) received a major makeover, with more emphasis on learning about Rutherford and Lucy through their own words, delving a little deeper into who they were as individuals and exploring their impact on Ohio, the United States and world affairs.
- More people can now enjoy the programs and services we offer due to our new handicapped accessible main entrance, which was designed by the architectural staff at the Ohio History Connection and financed through the state's capital appropriations bill.
- We further made our collections more accessible to the general public through a completely redesigned website containing a wealth of information and resources with 1.9 million page views and 308,904 sessions in 2016.

We launched a \$1,000,000 capital campaign to finance our Centennial projects; we raised \$1,500,000 in private funding (the most that we have ever raised in a single campaign) that allowed us to cross a number of maintenance projects off the to-do list: painted the Hayes Home, repaired the stained skylight in the museum atrium, replaced the badly cracked pathways around the Hayes Tomb and also the Rose Garden, painted restrooms and replaced outdated fixtures, upgraded the museum store, added a snack area, spruced up the main entrance gate and main entrance of the museum with beautiful plantings.

The result is that more people visited Spiegel Grove in 2016 than in the any of the past five years. Our centennial story was picked up in the national press. We had the opportunity to develop more meaningful partnerships with organizations, members, volunteers and the Hayes family. Without these relationships, none of this would have been possible. We also gained some confidence in ourselves and our ability to take risks. And it was heartening to know the changes we made were in direct response to stakeholder feedback and part of an overall plan to become more relevant to the public we serve.

As we share and celebrate with you our year in review, we are also eager to get started on the next great thing. We are about to embark upon a new strategic plan, one that will give significant attention to public programming. One such program is the *American Presidents Film and Literary Festival* which will be held at Spiegel Grove in October 2017. The theme is *People, Places, Politics, Power*. Through our relationships with filmmakers, other presidential sites and libraries and institutions like the Smithsonian and the Library of Congress, we will explore the role of the American Presidency and its impact on the American people and the world. There is nothing else like this in the United States. We are excited to create this first ever program at the nation's first presidential library.

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