

New Mexico 2019 Legislative Session

To: The New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee
The New Mexico Senate Appropriations & Finance Committee
The New Mexico House Appropriations & Finance Committee

This letter is in support of the NM Department of Cultural Affairs in general and the NM Museum of Space History in particular.

Museums play an important role in our society. They preserve our history for future generations and educate our children, citizens and visitors from around the world about our incredible heritage. They generate significant tourism driven revenue for their communities and provide a place for local citizens to honor the legacy of the past and the promise of the future.

Over the past few years, as the state's economy has improved, legislators took it upon themselves to work with the Department of Cultural Affairs and individual museums to improve these valuable facilities and enhance their impact on our state and communities.

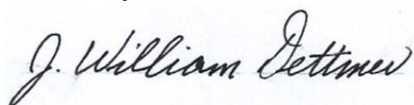
In Alamogordo, the New Mexico Museum of Space History has seen the positive impact of the legislature's dedication to improving and maintaining these vital community hubs. Under the leadership of executive director, Mr. Chris Orwoll, with the support of the Department of Cultural Affairs, area legislators and the City of Alamogordo, significant improvements to the facility have led to a steady increase in attendance and revenue. In 2012, the museum's attendance bottomed out at an all-time low of 74,000 – a sharp decline from the museum's heydays when it welcomed over 200,000 visitors. Now, just six short years later, attendance has climbed to more than 108,000 guests – over 85% of whom are from outside of our state.

In addition to space-related displays, the Museum operates the "New Mexico Rocketeer Academy", a series of week-long summer camps for students of different ages. It also provides displays at locations throughout the state and builds displays for other organizations. It is truly a multi-functional asset for the State of New Mexico.

During this legislative session the opportunity presents itself to continue that valuable work. Infrastructure projects need to continue with badly needed upgrades to decades-old equipment. Collections must be properly cared for and exhibits improved in order to maintain the interest of the public. Staffing levels need to be maintained and expanded to provide the best visitor experience possible.

I ask for your continued support and investment into the "Jewel of Alamogordo."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. William Dettmer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "J." and last name "Dettmer" clearly legible.

J. William Dettmer PhD, Colonel USAF Retired
Chair, New Mexico Museum of Space History Commission