

Wonder Women: Smithsonian appoints advisory council for budding women's history museum in Washington, DC

Ranging from actor Lynda Carter and tennis star Billie Jean King to former US commerce secretary Penny Pritzker and television executive Abbe Raven, its members are expected to play a crucial role in fundraising

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Lynda Carter and Billie Jean King

The Smithsonian Institution's Board of Regents today announced the appointment of an advisory council that will assist in planning for a new Smithsonian American Women's History Museum in Washington, DC. So far 20 of its 25 members have been named, among them well-known figures like the tennis champion Billie Jean King, the actor and singer Lynda Carter, former US secretary of commerce Penny Pritzker and the onetime A+E Networks chairman Abbe Raven.

Congress approved the creation of the women's history museum and a National Museum of the American Latino under the Smithsonian umbrella last December after decades-long campaigns by supporters.

The advisory council will advise the governing Board of Regents on such crucial decisions as selecting a location for the women's history museum—a site evaluation by an architecture and engineering firm is underway—and raising crucial funds. Under the legislation establishing each museum, half of the money is to be provided by Congress and half by private sources, raising the prospect that the advisory council will have to help secure hundreds of millions of dollars in donations in the coming years. It will also provide for the maintenance of a collection that has yet to be created.

“As someone who helped bring a museum to life on the National Mall, I know firsthand how indispensable an advisory board is,” says Lonnie Bunch, the secretary of the Smithsonian, who oversaw the opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in 2016 as founding director. “We have been fortunate to enlist an extraordinary group to help envision, create and guide this new museum, enabling the Smithsonian to expand the breadth and vividness of the American story by illuminating the essential contributions women have made to our nation.”

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institution could help rectify the imbalance and attract a broad following. “Only half the nation's story is being told,” the report said.

The advisory board is composed of 19 citizens, the Smithsonian secretary, a member of the Board of Regents and four members appointed by congressional leaders. The members appointed so far are:

- Lonnie Bunch, secretary of the Smithsonian (ex officio)
- Barbara Barrett, a former US ambassador to Finland and member of the

Smithsonian's Board of Regents

- Jane Abraham, former chair of a Congressional commission that studied the prospects for creating a women's history museum
- Catherine Allgor, president of the Massachusetts Historical Society
- Mary Boies, a litigator at the law firm Boies Schiller Flexner LLP
- Tory Burch, executive chairman and chief creative officer of Tory Burch LLC
- Lynda Carter, an actress, singer, songwriter and producer
- Jean Case, chairman of the National Geographic Society and chief executive of the Case Impact Network and the Case Foundation
- Melissa Fetter, former vice president of JP Morgan
- Edna Kane-Williams, chief diversity officer at the AARP
- Billie Jean King, the winner of 39 Grand Slam titles on the international tennis circuit
- Singleton McAllister, an attorney at Husch Blackwell LLP
- Penny Pritzker, founder and chairman of PSP Partners and former U.S. secretary of commerce
- Abbe Raven, chairman emeritus of A+E Networks and former chair of the National Museum of American History
- Vivian Riefberg, a director emeritus with McKinsey & Company and a professor at the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business
- Martine Rothblatt, founder of United Therapeutics and SiriusXM
- S. Mona Sinha, co-founder of Raising Change and founder of the Asian Women's Leadership University
- Cara Sylvester, executive vice president and chief marketing and digital officer for the Target Corporation
- House Representative Carolyn Maloney, a New York Democrat
- House Representative Jackie Walorski, an Indiana Republican

Two senators remain to be chosen, and three other additional members will be announced soon, the Smithsonian says.

“The founding council members come from a wide range of backgrounds and industries, but they each possess the same passion for gender equity and uplifting women’s voices,” says Lisa Sasaki, the interim director of the Smithsonian American Women’s History Museum. “They have broken through barriers and shattered expectations, making them uniquely qualified to lead a new museum that aims to do the same.”

The Smithsonian [appointed](#) [↗](#) an advisory board of trustees for the National Museum of the American Latino in June. Its members include an array of prominent corporate executives and such pop culture stars as the musician Emilio Estefan and the actresses Eva Longoria and Sofía Vergara.

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