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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 29, 2017

Contact: Eryl Wentworth

Phone: 202-661-8060

Email: ewentworth@conservation-us.org

AIC Presents Forbes Medal to Representatives Royce and Engel

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On June 22, 2017, U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Democrat Eliot Engel (D-NY) were presented with the American Institute for Conservation’s highest honor, the award of the Forbes Medal, for their bipartisan efforts that resulted in the creation of the “[Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act](#).”

Now passed into law, this act imposes new, stronger import restrictions on antiquities that are trafficked out of Syria. By reducing trade in looted artifacts and the profits from looting, historic sites in the Middle East and the cultural material they contain are better shielded, and, by extension, knowledge of our past, of our shared humanity, is saved.

During the presentation on Capitol Hill, Chairman Royce said, “I want to thank the American Institute for Conservation for all of its important work. We are witnessing a cultural devastation in the Middle East. ISIS, Assad and other parties to the conflict are decimating the region’s Greek, Roman, and Byzantine heritage, and sites and artifacts of importance to all three major faiths, from Sufi Shrines to Jonah’s tomb. The U.S. must always lead in supporting those in conflict zones who are risking their lives to preserve the world’s history for future generations.”

Recent turmoil in the Middle East – particularly in Syria and Iraq – led to a thriving trade in looted artifacts, benefiting organization such as ISIS. AIC is pleased to celebrate these U.S. Congressmen who recognized the dangers of such looting, and worked across the aisle to protect precious cultural heritage from exploitation.

“On behalf of the board of directors of the American Institute for Conservation, I extend our thanks to Representatives Engel and Royce for their individual efforts and for their guidance of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs that has both established a precedent for and emphasized the necessity of protecting cultural heritage,” said AIC Executive Director Eryl Wentworth.

“This award is a fitting way to recognize their bipartisan work on behalf of the American and global community to preserve objects and sites of cultural heritage.”

The AIC Forbes Medal celebrates those whose work on national and international platforms has significantly advanced the preservation of cultural heritage. Prior to honoring Congressmen Engel and Royce, only eight recipients had received this honor since its inception in 1994.

The Forbes Medal is named for Edward Waldo Forbes (1873-1969), who served as director of the Fogg Museum at Harvard University from 1909 through 1944. He founded the country's first fine arts conservation treatment and research center, and was dedicated to technical research of artworks. Four years after retiring from the Fogg, he founded and served as director of the American Research Center in Egypt.

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About AIC

The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) exists to support the conservation professionals who preserve our cultural heritage. AIC plays a crucial role in establishing and upholding professional standards, promoting research and publications, providing educational opportunities, and fostering the exchange of knowledge among conservators, allied professionals, and the public. Since its founding in 1972, AIC has grown to more than 3,500 conservators, educators, scientists, students, archivists, art historians, and institutional members in more than forty countries around the world, all of whom have the same goal: to preserve the material evidence of our past so we can learn from it today and appreciate it in the future. Learn more about AIC at www.conservation-us.org.

The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works
1156 15th Street, NW • Suite 320 • Washington, DC 20005
202-452-9545 • info@conservation-us.org • www.conservation-us.org