

February 11, 2009

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
The Honorable Max Baucus
The Honorable Harry Reid
The Honorable Thad Cochran
The Honorable Charles Grassley
The Honorable David Obey
The Honorable Charlie Rangel
The Honorable Henry Waxman
The Honorable Jerry Lewis
The Honorable Dave Camp

Dear H.R. 1 Conferees:

On behalf of our nation's more than 17,500 museums, I am writing to urge you to delete the funding prohibition (Sec. 1609 of the Specter, Collins, Lieberman, Nelson amendment to H.R. 1) that would prevent museums from even competing for any funds made available in the economic stimulus bill.

Museums are being hard hit by this economy, laying off workers and cutting back on services. Not allowing museums to even compete for the funds in this bill is wrongheaded and completely disregards the fact that museums play a critical role in our communities as economic engines.

Museums are a vital part of our economy:

- Museums employ more than a half-million Americans.
- Museums spend an estimated \$14.5 billion annually on goods and services.
- Museums rank among the top three family vacation destinations. In fact, visitors to cultural and heritage destinations stay 53% longer and spend 36% more money than other kinds of tourists.

Museums stand ready to work with you as part of the solution for bringing America through our current economic challenges. We simply ask for the chance to compete for funds where states, cities, and localities feel that a museum would be an essential part of their community's revitalization. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ford W. Bell, DVM
President