

February 4, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

I am writing to urge you to vote NO on a proposed amendment by Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) to prohibit any funds in the economic stimulus bill from going to museums, zoos, or aquariums.

The language of the amendment, (Limitation of Funds Amendment No. 175, as filed) is, "*None of the amounts appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act may be used for any casino or other gambling establishment, aquarium, zoo, golf course, swimming pool, stadium, community park, museum, theater, arts center, or highway beautification project, including renovation, remodeling, construction, salaries, furniture, zero-gravity chairs, big screen televisions, beautification, rotating pastel lights, and dry heat saunas.*"

We are very concerned that museums, zoos, and aquariums have been lumped together with rotating pastel lights and dry heat saunas. This is a serious misunderstanding of the vital role that museums play in our communities. We ask that you consider how museums contribute to the nation's infrastructure:

- Museums offer after-school programs for at-risk youth;
- Museums work with school districts to both train educators and help teach the curriculum;
- Museums provide lifelong learning opportunities for Americans of all ages;
- Museums are a prime destination for tourists and generate considerable spending and revenue that spurs the economy;
- Zoos and aquariums have tremendous public benefit for environmental education and wildlife conservation. Infrastructure investments that support these living collections will be critical in the economic recovery of cities and localities.

Museums employ more than a quarter-million Americans, spend an estimated \$14.5 billion annually, and 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. Unfortunately, the economic downturn has forced museums to struggle just to maintain essential services.

Museums stand ready to work with you as part of the solution for bringing America through our current economic challenges. Please contact me or AAM's Director of Government Relations, Gail Ravnitzky Silberglied, if we can provide any additional information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ford W. Bell, DVM
President