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Friday, June 06, 2008

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-131, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Wayne Allard
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Byrd and Feinstein and Ranking Members Cochran and Allard:

The League of United Latin American Citizens, our nation's oldest and largest Hispanic civil rights organization, write to share our enthusiasm for the final passage of The Commission to Study the Potential Creation of the National Museum of the American Latino Act, S. 500. The bill was included in the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 (S. 2739), which passed the Senate on April 10, 2008 and the House of Representatives on April 29, 2008 and was most recently signed into law by the President on May 8, 2008.

We write to respectfully request that the Commission to study the potential creation of the National Museum of the American Latino be fully funded at \$2.1 million in Fiscal Year 2009 to carry out its function. The Commission would help us determine how we can properly recognize the contributions of Hispanic Americans to our nation's history by studying the potential creation of a national museum dedicated to the art, culture, and the story of Hispanic Americans.

Though American Latinos' contributions span centuries and economic sectors, many people are unaware of the role Americans of Latino descent played, and continue to play, in the building of this great nation. Now that more than 48 million Americans are of Hispanic descent in this country, there is a stronger interest in ensuring that America's national museums portray an inclusive picture of our current and future nation.

The Commission would study the impact of the potential museum and the cost of construction and maintenance. It would also develop an action plan, a fundraising plan, and a recommendation on whether to proceed with construction of the museum. Commission members, selected by the President and Congress, will be comprised of leaders with a commitment to the American Latino community and with experience planning for and administering similar museums.

Museums in our nation's capital should reflect the history, culture, and achievements of the people of the United States, yet there is no substantive permanent Latino presence in any of the exhibits. Even with the many challenges and opportunities facing the Latino community, the importance of proper representation of Latinos and their contributions in our nation's foremost cultural institutions cannot be underestimated. Just as troubling is that millions of schoolchildren and families as well as tourists from all over the world can visit Washington, DC without ever encountering a single museum, monument, or collection that helps to educate them about this nation's largest minority.

When Americans travel to Washington, D.C., they expect the museums, monuments, and national parks to reflect the complete American experience. Providing the resources necessary for the Commission to do its work would be a major step toward ensuring that every American has the opportunity to learn the full history of our nation.

Sincerely,

Rosa Rosales
LULAC National President