

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2008

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

We write to request that a 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. Language to create the Commission, originally within S. 500, 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. President Bush signed the bill into law on March 8, 2008.

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. Latinos have been part of American history for more than 400 years. Hispanics founded some of the oldest cities in the U.S., such as St. Augustine, Florida in 1565 and Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1598. Hispanic Americans bravely fought in every war in U.S. history, including the American Revolution, and more than 80,000 Hispanics served in the Vietnam War. While Hispanics comprised only 4.5% of the U.S. population at the time of the Vietnam War, they represented 5.5% of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. Today, more than 44 million Hispanics are a part of our rich social fabric.

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. The Commission would be comprised of leaders, selected by the President and Congress, with

a commitment to the American Latino community and with experience planning for and the administration of similar museums.

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,

Ken Salazar

Phil Martinez

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Joe Biden

John F. Kerry

Bob Kennedy

Robert Menendez

Dick Durbin

Frank R. Lautenberg

Al Franken

Chris

Garry Reid

Barack Obama

Pete Dominici Chuck Schum
