



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

AUG 28 2026

The Honorable Members of the Board of Regents
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, DC 20560

Dear Members of the Board of Regents:

As outlined in Executive Order 14416, titled “Restoring Trust in the Smithsonian Institution,” the administration has concluded that action is necessary to restore the Smithsonian Institution (Smithsonian or Institution) to the mission originally entrusted to it by Congress and the American people. As you are aware, it is the executive branch’s responsibility to ensure that taxpayer funds and the support the Smithsonian receives from executive departments and agencies are used to preserve America’s precious cultural inheritance, not advance a divisive, ideological agenda.

In 1846, Congress established the Smithsonian as a trust instrumentality of the United States and vested its governance in the Board of Regents. As an entity created to be the Nation’s foremost steward of American history and culture, the Smithsonian bears a responsibility to preserve and present the American story faithfully, accurately, coherently and in a manner worthy of the public trust. That responsibility is reinforced by the more than \$1 billion in taxpayer funding Congress provides to support the Institution’s mission each year.

In its recent report titled “Saving America’s Story: How Ideological Capture at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History Erases Our Heritage,” the White House Domestic Policy Council documents a consistent pattern of leadership decisions—including revisions to the mission statement of the National Museum of American History (NMAH or Museum), changes in strategic priorities, adoption of a new Interpretive Plan, public statements by senior leadership and the resulting direction of exhibitions and programming—which, taken together, have decisively “reframed” NMAH away from presenting a coherent and accurate account of the American story and toward advancing an ideological agenda that seeks to transform both the Smithsonian and the country. Because these concerns arise from executive leadership and institutional ideology at the Smithsonian, the appropriate response must likewise address executive leadership and institutional ideology.

NMAH’s current Interpretive Plan illustrates how Smithsonian and NMAH leadership has sanctioned a radical institutional ideology to permeate NMAH operations. The Interpretive Plan instructs Museum staff to, “whatever the topic,” tie everything to “the core issues of our time,” namely, “race and identity,” “gender and sexuality,” “environmental change,” “immigration and migrations,” “economic inequality,” “technological change” and “nationalism and globalism,” stating that “To do anything less is to shirk our commitment to relevance.”

Indeed, the White House Domestic Policy Council's report is replete with alarming examples of how this radical ideology is reflected across exhibitions, educational materials and public programming, causing historic subjects and artifacts to be presented as vehicles for this ideology while packaged as educational programming. For example, the report documents how NMAH's educational materials and exhibit language have sought to legitimize illegal immigration and open borders. This includes developing a curriculum that instructs high school teachers to avoid the terms "illegal alien," "illegal immigrant" and "illegal, illegals"; sending Museum staff to Mexico to interview deported illegal aliens; and creating official educational materials lionizing those advocating for citizenship for millions of illegals, for the abolition of Federal immigration law enforcement and against the deportation of criminal aliens. The report also describes how several NMAH exhibits present the view that biological men can be women and should be permitted to compete in women's sports.

The ultimate effect of this radical ideology is to weaken our shared American identity, erase our heritage and condition the public to accept these attempts to weaponize our national institutions and traditions in support of a radical political agenda.

In addition to the more than \$1 billion appropriated to the Smithsonian by Congress each year, the Smithsonian enjoys support from executive departments and agencies. Those executive departments and agencies cannot in good conscience continue to support the Smithsonian under current leadership by, for example, loaning artifacts for exhibits, enabling procurement processes and making discretionary grants. Indeed, the administration has recently uncovered evidence that the Smithsonian leadership's institutional culture may have resulted in significant violations of Federal antidiscrimination law, including creating a hostile work environment and engaging in practices that classify individuals and allocate opportunities, funding and other benefits on the basis of race, ethnicity and other protected characteristics. It is also concerning that the Smithsonian leadership's culture of ideological activism has not only corrupted the Institution but has spread across the country and corrupted the American Alliance for Museums—the primary organization and accrediting body for the museum profession—among others. Federal agencies with relevant authorities therefore have a duty to investigate and address these unlawful practices, both at the Smithsonian and elsewhere.

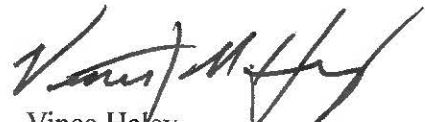
Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that you meet with us in person at your earliest convenience to determine how best to address the findings outlined in this letter and identified in the aforementioned report.

The Smithsonian belongs to the American people. It exists to preserve and present "the inspiring story of the United States—its origins, struggles, development, traditions, strength"—for this and future generations.

The administration is committed to working with the Smithsonian to accomplish these objectives and to restore public trust in one of our Nation's great institutions. We look forward to working together to achieve that goal.

Sincerely,


Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior


Vince Haley
Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy