

United States Senate

July 18, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Dear Mr. Ferguson,

Congratulations on your nomination to serve on the Board of Regents for the Smithsonian Institution. As you know, the Smithsonian has been entrusted by Congress since 1846 with a unique mission to support “the increase and diffusion of knowledge,” for the American people and receives over \$1 billion in taxpayer funds annually to advance this goal.

According to the Duties and Responsibilities of the Regents, you will be tasked with operating and maintaining a “culture of inquiry,” which includes “meaningful and forthright discussion of issues that shape the Smithsonian’s strategic plans and operations.”¹ Further, you will be expected to “oversee management” of the Smithsonian and monitor the “operation of the Smithsonian and its programs.”² The Board’s bylaws also empower you to establish standing or special committees, and approve the Institution’s annual budget and appropriations request.³ A review of the Board’s previous meeting minutes shows the Board is also routinely briefed on activities the Smithsonian is involved in, including curriculum development for Advanced Placement courses.⁴

In order to ensure that the Smithsonian Institute is not distracted from its mission by choosing to offer divisive, ideological content, we respectfully ask you to commit to the Smithsonian’s non-partisan, unifying mission by answering the following questions before you are confirmed by the Senate:

1. The Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian hosted an event on June 23, 2023 to feature “indigenous drag performers” for a night of “extravaganza of dance, music, and humor.” This event is advertised for “kids and families” and does not appear to include any age restrictions.⁵
 - a. Do you think that taxpayer dollars should be subsidizing drag shows?
 - b. Do you think that it is appropriate to allow children to attend publicly funded drag shows featuring lewd and sexually suggestive content?
 - c. If not, how do you intend to use your position on the Board of Regents to discourage the Smithsonian from hosting such taxpayer funded events in the future?

¹ Smithsonian Institution, “Duties and Responsibilities of the Regents” (2010), 1.

² Ibid

³ Smithsonian Institution, “Other Committees,” and “Administration,” in *Bylaws of the Board of Regents and Charter Provisions of the Smithsonian Institution 2023* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2023), 10-14.

⁴ Smithsonian Institution, “Minutes of the January 30, 2023, Meeting of the Board of Regents” (2023), 8-9.

⁵ Jessica Chasmar, “Smithsonian hosts drag show to showcase ‘Indigenous LGBTQIA+ community,’” FOX News, June 1, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/smithsonian-hosts-drag-show-showcase-indigenous-lgbtqia-community>.

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2. According to recent reports, the Smithsonian's American Women's History Museum, which was established by Congress under 20 U.S.C. §80t, plans to include materials featuring biological men who claim to be women in an effort to be "inclusive."⁶
 - a. Do you think it is appropriate for American Women's History Museum to include biological males when Congress did not authorize this inclusion?
 - b. If not, how do you intend to use your position to ensure that the American Women's History Museum honors women, according to Congress' intention?
3. In January 2023, the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum allegedly kicked out a dozen Catholic high school students for were wearing hats inscribed with a pro-life message reading "Rosary PRO-LIFE." The students were allegedly told to either remove their hats or leave the museum. The museum has since apologized for the incident.⁷
 - a. Do you condemn this religious bigotry and discrimination against pro-life Americans?
 - b. How do you intend to use your position to ensure all Americans, regardless of political or religious beliefs, are welcomed at the Smithsonian?
4. In July 2020, the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History published the claim that "if you are white in America, you have benefited from the color of your skin" and a "fact sheet" asserting that "white culture" dominates "institutional power in America" and is defined by commitment to the following ideas⁸:
 - a. "Self-reliance"
 - b. "The nuclear family"
 - c. "Objective, rational linear thinking"
 - d. "Hard work is the key to success"
 - e. "Plan for the future"
 - f. "Quantitative emphasis"
 - g. "Be polite"
 - i. Do you agree with the NMAAH's "fact sheet" on white culture?
 - ii. Do you think it is appropriate for a publicly funded institution to endorse pseudo-scientific racist materials?
 - iii. If not, how do you intend to use your position to ensure the Smithsonian is not promoting racist or divisive content with taxpayer funds?

Sincerely,

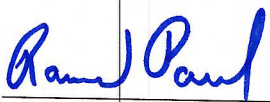
⁶ Alexander Hall, "Museum of American Women to feature 'transgender women' to be 'inclusive,'" New York Post, March 2, 2023, <https://nypost.com/2023/03/02/museum-of-american-women-to-feature-transgender-women/>

⁷ Yael Halon, "Smithsonian sued by Catholic students kicked out of museum for wearing pro-life hats," FOX News, February 8, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/media/smithsonian-sued-catholic-students-kicked-museum-wearing-pro-life-hats>.

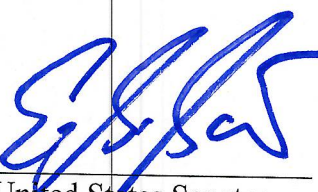
⁸ Sam Dorman, "DC museum criticized for saying 'delayed gratification' and 'decision-making' are aspects of 'whiteness,'" FOX News, July 15, 2020, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/dc-museum-graphic-whiteness-race>; Sam Dorman, "African-American museum removes controversial chart linking 'whiteness' to self-reliance, decision-making," FOX News, July 16, 2020, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/african-american-museum-removes-whiteness-chart-race>.


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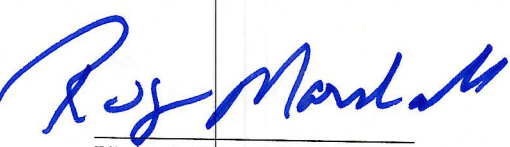

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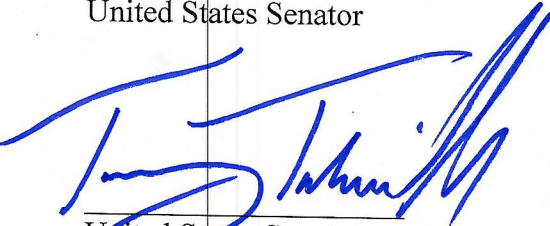
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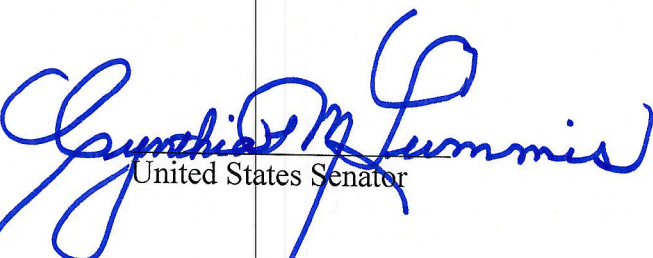
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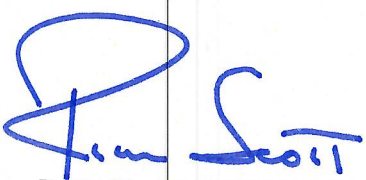
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