

\$380,000 earmark for the American Lighthouse Foundation of Maine

The American Lighthouse Foundation (ALF) preserves historic light stations nationwide. This is accomplished through the restoration, promotion and adaptive re-use of America's light stations, as well as educational initiatives. This amendment will strike funding for a \$380,000 earmark intended to fund, "the restoration and preservation of Maine's historic lighthouses."

\$380,000 Earmark for Only 10 Lighthouses, Intended to Support Maine Economy

According to the American Lighthouse Foundation (ALF) website, "the funding will help the Rockland-based American Lighthouse Foundation, which cares for 10 lighthouses along the coast of Maine, to enhance the organization's preservation and public access programs."¹

ALF executive director Bob Trapani comments "that ensuring the existence of the historic structures have a vital financial impact on Maine's economy." However, Maine currently has a state budget of \$7.5 billion, and if restoring their lighthouses is a state priority, then the state of Maine should budget for such costs and not ask taxpayers across the county to fund this parochial project.²

Recent 990 tax return form shows significant savings and revenue for Foundation and \$2 million in total assets³

According to their most recent 990 tax return form, the American Lighthouse Foundation reported \$335,200 in "savings and temporary cash investments." An earmark of \$380,000 is unnecessary for a non-profit organization who reported well over \$330,000 in savings the same year.

¹ "400,000 budgeted for Maine Lighthouses Cared for by the American Lighthouse Foundation," American Lighthouse Foundation, http://www.lighthousefoundation.org/newsroom/alf_fedapprop09_080902.htm

² "Total Appropriations & Allocations, All funds, 2008-2009 Biennium, Through 123rd Legislature, 1st Special Session", Maine State Legislature, Office of Fiscal and Program Review. 12/10/2008, http://www.maine.gov/legis/ofpr/total_state_budget/approps_alloc/0809_Approps_Alloc.pdf

³ Guidestar USA, Inc, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. 2009.

<http://www.guidestar.org/pgShowFastResults.do;jsessionid=362ACAB9897627F0F8E69ADC1425B255.web06Worker.web06Worker?partner=guidestar&source=homepage>

The American Lighthouse Foundation also reported *total revenue* of \$750,421 according to their most recent 990 form. Of which, the functional expenses were reported at \$613, 576—still allowing for considerable profit.

Furthermore, the American Lighthouse Foundation reported nearly \$2 million in total assets.

ALF Revenue sources beyond state and federal⁴

The “Maine Lighthouse Museum” is open 7-days a week and charges \$5 admission. It boasts a very impressive and expensive gift shop and charges annual membership levels from \$25 to \$2,500.

Federal funding for museums should go through a competitive, accountable grant process.

Instead of federally funding museums through earmarks, museums should be funded through competitive grants. Two programs that fund museums through grants are the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the National Science Foundation’s Informal Science Education Program (ISE).

These grants are competitive and there is a process where an institution must prove its worth and is closely monitored by the agencies. There are real consequences throughout the grant period if a museum doesn’t adhere to the terms and conditions of the award.

⁴ American Lighthouse Foundation, <http://www.lighthousefoundation.org/index.html>