

February 1, 2012

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McConnell,

I am requesting to be consulted before the Senate enters into any unanimous consent agreements or time limitations regarding S. 1537, the National September 11 Memorial and Museum Act of 2011.

We must ensure our nation is never again made vulnerable to terrorist attacks like those which caught us off guard on September 11, 2001. Nor should we ever forget the innocent victims whose lives were lost, their families who continue to suffer, or the many others whose lives were changed forever on that day. Memorials to the victims will help those still in pain with their healing process and remind us our freedom can never be taken for granted.

The events of September 11 hold a special place in our nation's history and in each of our hearts. The national and personal significance of this tragic day has been, and should continue to be, appropriately memorialized and remembered. However, I have concerns S. 1537 may fall short of this worthy goal.

The legislation creates a permanent duplicative federal funding stream for a privately operated facility. The museum has received more than \$75 million in federal assistance over the past two years and remains eligible to apply for additional funds from a variety of federal programs if necessary. Yet, this legislation authorizes at least \$200 million over the next ten years for the effort, but does not include any provisions to pay for these potential costs, adding to our more than \$15 trillion debt.

S. 1537 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide technical and financial assistance to the Board of Directors of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum, for operating the National September 11 Memorial and Museum located at the World Trade Center in New York City, New York. Specifically, the legislation authorizes \$20 million for FY 2013, and annually thereafter, to carry out this financial and technical assistance, without clear definitions of these terms or any limits on potential use of funds.

S. 1537 also expresses it is the purpose of this Act to “ensure that the Memorial will be a resource to the more than 600 September 11 Memorials being established throughout the United States,” as well as ensure education programs are established to pass on the history of September 11 to the next generations. According to its website, the Foundation also plans to open exhibits in multiple international locations including London, Madrid, and Barcelona. It is unclear to what extent taxpayers would be responsible for supporting these overseas exhibits, and the cost of providing financial assistance to both these and the more than 600 exhibits in the states, all of which also may apply for traditional federal grant dollars through other government programs, such as the Community Development Block Grant, museum grant funding, and Department of Interior park programs.

In short, the legislation would authorize a permanent \$20 million annual federal funding stream for the memorial and museum, operated by the Foundation. However, the memorial has already received extensive government funding, and is eligible for numerous sources of other federal assistance. According to its 990 IRS filing, in 2010, the Foundation received \$69.4 million in government grants, and spent \$27,141 on lobbying efforts, as well as more than \$82,000 on conferences, conventions, and meetings. In addition, according to an audit also available on the Foundation website, the memorial received \$53.5 million in FY 2009 in grant funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Even more, the organization ended 2010 with more than \$584 million in net assets, while total expenses totaled \$13.9 million, far less than authorized by S. 1537.

A full accounting of previously awarded federal funding, as well as detailed breakdown of the project with itemized cost estimates, would be useful for learning more about current sources of funding, and potential need for this legislation.

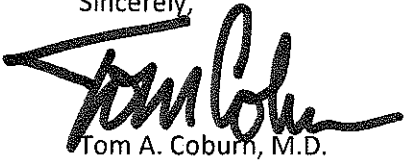
Further, given the deep-held sentiments of this day, the Foundation has been able to raise substantial funds from private sources, including individuals, professional sporting affiliations, and companies across the nation. According to its own website, the Foundation has received hundreds of private contributions, including at least \$20 million from the Bank of America, \$15 million from Deutsche Bank and JPMorgan Chase & Co each, and at least \$10 million each from American Express Foundation, AIG, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs Foundation, Verizon Foundation, General Electric, to name only a few. Other contributors include United Health Care, Walt Disney Company Foundation, Coca-Cola Foundation, Lehman Brothers, the New York Mets Foundation, the New York Yankees, Robert De Niro, the NFL, Starbucks Foundation, and countless others.

As a country, we must continue to remember and honor the victims of September 11, as we have throughout the last decade. At the federal level, extensive funding currently is available to the New York 9/11 Memorial, as well as to the other memorials commemorating the tragedy, including at the Pentagon and Shanksville, Pennsylvania, both also sites of great loss on that day.

The merits of this memorial have been demonstrated by the significant contributions and support it is receiving from private and public sources. I would like to receive additional information as to why the multiple existing federal funding sources available are insufficient to support this effort. I would also like to see a breakdown of the budget justifications from the Foundation and the Committee for the amounts authorized by this bill. It is, after all, our obligation as stewards of the treasury to scrutinize for taxpayers how every penny we spend is put to use, even for the best intentioned projects.

Thank you again for protecting my rights regarding S. 1537, the National September 11 Memorial and Museum Act of 2011.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Coburn". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Tom A. Coburn, M.D.

United States Senate