

February 9, 2012

Debra Burlingame & Tim Sumner
Co-founders
9/11 Families for a Safe and Strong America

Dear Debra and Tim,

Thank you for your letter in support of S.1537. I am so sorry for your personal loss on September 11, 2001. There is no question this memorial and museum will be a place of national remembrance for our great loss as a nation. It is, and will continue to be, a tribute to overcoming adversity, and a source of healing for all who visit. The national significance has been reinforced by the extensive federal support currently being provided to the Foundation, as well as the generous outpouring of private contributions from across the country.

As an Oklahoman, I am far too familiar with the great pain and heartache that comes from such a horrific act of hatred and terrorism. As you know, the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in the heart of Oklahoma City was hit by a terrorist attack in 1995, killing 168 individuals, including 19 children, and injuring more than 650 others. A touching memorial and museum now stands as a tribute to those who lost their lives and who sacrificed to save so many. The OKC National Memorial and Museum current operates on private donations, accepting no federal or state support. The staff there, including Kari Watkins, the museum and memorial director, would be happy to meet with members from the 9/11 Foundation to share their experience.

The 9/11 Museum and Memorial will be a national treasure and its merits are unquestioned. There is no reason to pay a DC lobbyist \$20,000 a month to advocate on behalf of it or to have politicians wrap themselves around it as a way to create a breach in the earmark ban established to end the awarding of federal funds to projects of lesser priority, parochial or questionable value. This memorial should, will and is receiving federal assistance because *every* American knows its significance and wants to be sure the victims of that day are never forgotten.

Thank you for providing some additional information about the Foundation. I absolutely agree with you “the 9/11 memorial and museum project should not be the subject of a protracted and unseemly political fight over funding.” The significance of this memorial is great, and I have no doubt whatsoever it would be eligible for financial assistance from a multitude of federal programs as evidenced by the more than \$310 million already provided and millions of dollars more promised for future years.

If you are having difficulty navigating the myriad of federal programs for the many sources of available aid for the museum, I gladly offer the support of my office to assist you. We would be happy to meet with Foundation staff to help identify and apply for grants through these programs.

If it can be demonstrated no federal funds are available from existing programs to meet the project needs and this bill is the only solution, then the authorization of funding provided in S. 1537, should be paid for with a reduction in wasteful or duplicative spending elsewhere in the federal budget. I am happy to provide a list of possible offsets for consideration.

Again, I believe the 9/11 Memorial & Museum should be held in the highest esteem, above politics and above the DC tradition of lobbying and earmarking of which taxpayers have had enough. Let's work together to demonstrate projects of great merit, of which I can think of few greater than this memorial, do not have to take this path to receive recognition and federal assistance.

Sincerely,

Tom A. Coburn, M.D.
United States Senate