

NWHM LEGISLATION PASSES OUT OF SENATE COMMITTEE

Today, April 21, 2010, the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee passed HR 1700 and S. 2129 by a voice vote. In introducing the bill on the agenda, Chairwoman Barbara Boxer stated, "I wholeheartedly support this bill" and then she listed Senators Amy Klobuchar and Kirsten Gillibrand who are EPW members and were also original cosponsors on the Senate bill.

One amendment, called a "technical correction," was made to both bills. The amendment corrects a drafting error in the bill so that the Museum will be covered by all environmental protections. NWHM could run into environmental contamination on the site at 12th Street and Independence Avenue SW that is designated in the legislation and clean-up could be costly. This correction ensures that the federal government is responsible for any necessary clean-up as provided in the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, And Liability Act (better known as CERCLA).

Since only one bill can be signed into law and it must have passed the House and Senate, it has been agreed that the House bill, HR 1700, will be the one that proceeds to the Senate floor for passage. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's staff has committed to "hotlining" the bill to the Senate floor for a vote.

The amendment added in EPW will require the bill to go back again to the House for final passage. That way, identical bills will have passed the House and Senate and it can go to the President's desk for signing. While the correction to the language adds one more step by referring the bill back to the House, it provides vital protections to NWHM. NWHM is very appreciative of all the work done by Senate and House staff to ensure the correction is in the best interest of the Museum.