

Adopted
Council 7/3/91
1990-91 CD#62.8

RESOLUTION ON REVISION OF A SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION EXHIBITION

WHEREAS, "The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920" is being exhibited March 15 through July 7, 1991, in the National Museum of American Art, operated by the Smithsonian Institution; and

WHEREAS, This art-historical exhibition has created a widely-publicized controversy because of its perceived interpretation of United States history; and

WHEREAS, Concern has been expressed at the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee hearings about the exhibition's viewpoint; and

WHEREAS, Similar concerns over the content of artists' works recently have threatened suppression of artistic expression as a condition of federal funding; and

WHEREAS, The Washington Post reported on June 2, 1991, that the exhibition curators, pressured by reviewer comments and a Congressional threat to reduce funding, revised ten of the fifty-five exhibition texts; and

WHEREAS, In their role as traditional forums of free expression, libraries often use government funds to mount exhibits and present programs containing controversial points of view; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the American Library Association urge the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee to fund the Smithsonian Institution and similar institutions regardless of the point of view of the artist or exhibition; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Library Association support the exhibition curators and gallery administration in resisting pressure to revise text because of controversy and/or pressure about the viewpoint expressed in the exhibition's content; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to members of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee; Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska; Senator Slade Gorton of Washington; William Truettner, exhibit curator; John Frohnmayer, Director of the National Endowment for the Arts; Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., Chair of the National Museum of American Art Advisory Commission; and Robert McC. Adams, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

Adopted by the Intellectual Freedom Committee
July 1, 1991