

PROPOSED BILL NO. 252

AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE LYMAN ALLYN ART MUSEUM

As a Connecticut tax payer residing in New London County and President of the Board of Trustees of the Lyman Allyn Art Museum I wholeheartedly support Bill No. 252 "to provide funds for the Lyman Allyn Art Museum for capital improvements."

With a background as a former assistant to the Director of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and subsequent exposure to many regions in Connecticut as a salaried physician providing and overseeing women's health care in several hospitals and city clinics, the VA and for the Department of Mental Health, I recognize the importance of the Lyman Allyn Art Museum to the New London community and region. To help understand why it has become the cultural beacon of southeastern Connecticut, here are a few important background points:

- * The Lyman Allyn Art Museum is the result of the generous and far-sighted bequest of a descendant of New London whalers, Harriet Allyn, who willed that her house and land be given in trust for the enjoyment of the town of New London. She also left sufficient funds for a museum to be built for the benefit of the citizens. Access to the Museum, named after her father, has been free to New Londoners since it opened in 1932.
- * The very substantial neoclassical Museum building designed by the widely recognized architect, Charles Platt, with its signature columned portico, welcoming entrance, grand staircase and generous galleries has become an architectural monument in and of itself. It was hailed as "the finest small museum in the nation".
- * Its well selected collection grew very rapidly and its significance became broadly recognized, thanks to astute, energetic, opportunistic benefactors and sometimes very eccentric leadership. The more than 10,000 irreplaceable objects that museum now cares for represent a surprisingly broad spectrum of man's creativity, very unusual for a community of New London's size.
- * These collections have provided the inspiration for well received exhibitions and a broad range of well attended interactive educational programs which annually draw more than 5,000 of our school children, with the help of museum sponsored buses.
- * The volunteer Board of Trustees is entrusted to ensure the best possible use of the collections for the benefit of the New London community by providing appropriate, engaging exhibitions and educational programs. We are also charged to secure proper shelter, protection and preservation of this irreplaceable cultural heritage for future generations.

Dr. A. Allyn

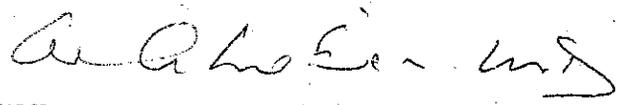
The current challenge that looms before the guardians of these delicate treasures valued at more than 20 million dollars is to upgrade the interior climate control essential to the preservation of works of art. Our inefficient building, a beautiful heap of steel, stone and mortar, is soon to be 77 years old. It has seen many periodic stopgap efforts at upgrading its HVAC, electrical, lighting and security systems.

Our climate control, most critical to the preservation of works art, relies on an antiquated oil heating system that is more than 3 decades old, coupled with temperature/humidity control systems more that are more than 15 years old. The cost of the ever increasing maintenance of this patchwork system is a major budget drain, on top of the constant annual expense of 20,000 gallons of oil required to maintain the museum climate constantly at the exact same temperature and humidity round the clock, day in, day out, whatever the season, whether the museum is open or closed.

Since returning to the public trust of the New London community in 2004 after a brief period of stewardship by Connecticut College, new board and staff leadership have devoted much energy to playing catch up attending to the deferred infrastructure needs. We were blessed to have had your support with a very significant grant-in-aid in 2004 from the State to address directly our deteriorating bricks and mortar, roofing, drainage and essential renovations of our storage area. This project was finally completed September, 2008. This makeover has been very uplifting to us.

Our next step, providing an energy efficient, state of art HVAC system will help us both contain overhead costs and significantly reduce our carbon footprint. Most important will be the reassurance that we are successfully carrying out our responsibilities as conscientious stewards in preserving this New London treasure.

We urge you to back this bill. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted. 

William A. Lieber, MD
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Associate Clinical Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology
University of Connecticut

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