



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

July 7, 2011

Chancellor Meryl H. Tisch
Regents Office
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, N.Y. 12234

Dear Chancellor Tisch:

I write to you as the President of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) to express our concern over the imminent layoff of five State Museum scientists. We are particularly concerned about the layoff of three key Ph.D.-level positions, that is, the State Archaeologist/Director of Cultural Resource Survey, the Curator of Archaeology, and the Curator of Historical Archaeology. These positions are critical for the effective management of historic properties and heritage sites in the State of New York, and these sites are a vital part of the cultural tourism that is an important component of the state's economy.

The SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to the research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With almost than 7,000 members, SAA represents professional archaeologists in colleges and universities, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. SAA has members in all 50 states, including 243 members in New York, as well as many other nations around the world.

The positions named above are critically important. They provide vital services to educators and the general public, and meet the requirements under State law that the State Museum keep its collection of historic artifacts usable and available so it can benefit the people of New York. The State Museum has earned a strong national and international reputation based on its stewardship of heritage resources and the use of museum collections in educational activities.

The SAA recognizes that some layoffs of State employees may need to occur because of the state's budgetary problems. We urge you, however, to allow the staffing decisions at the State Museum to be made by the Museum Director. The Director and his staff are the people who best understand how the museum can reduce its staff size and continue to meet its mandated educational responsibilities. If these positions must be eliminated, we urge you to work closely with the Museum Director to ensure that the responsibilities assigned to the eliminated positions are fulfilled in some other way, providing long-term and secure management of archaeological collections and the information they represent. Only in this way can these heritage resources be properly cared for.

In closing, the SAA expresses its strong support for the State Museum, its professional staff, and the essential services the museum provides to the people of New York State. The State Archaeologist and Curators of Archaeology at the State Museum are the stewards of significant artifact collections that represent thousands of years of prehistory and history. These collections, and the knowledge they embody, are cultural treasures of immeasurable value, and they deserve a qualified professional staff to care for them and make them available for educational use in the State.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "William F. Limp". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "W".

William F. Limp, Ph.D.,
President

cc: Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor, State of New York
Dr. John B. King, Jr., Commissioner of Education, State Education Department
Dr. Clifford A. Siegfried, Director, New York State Museum