



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

January 11, 2012

The Honorable Ben Brooks, Co-Chair
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Room 729, State House
11 South Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130

Dear Chairman Brooks:

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) congratulates the State Senate for rejecting legislation (House Bill 104) in the previous session that would have altered the Alabama Underwater Cultural Resources Act (AUCRA) to the detriment of the state's priceless submerged cultural resources. We recently learned, however, that another such bill may be introduced when the new session of the legislature begins next month.

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 nearly 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 as well as many other nations around the world.

In our letter of April 25, 2011, we outlined the reasons for our strong opposition to last year's bill. It is our understanding that Senate Bill 81 (SB 81) will be introduced upon the opening of the 2012 legislative session, and that it is nearly identical to HB 104. As such, the substance of our opposition remains unchanged: there is simply no pressing or compelling reason to amend AUCRA to remove its protections for underwater cultural resources not associated with shipwrecks. Under SB 81 Alabama would be the only state in the Union where such materials could be removed. The vast majority of its underwater Native American, Spanish, French, and Civil War artifacts would be exposed to pillage and sale, with many or even most being transported beyond state lines. If these items are taken in such a manner, all of the information that could have been learned from them will be lost forever, and the cultural heritage of Alabama will be vastly diminished.

These archaeological resources need to be preserved and interpreted so that present and future generations of Alabamans can learn and understand their shared history. As before, SAA respectfully requests that the Senate continue in its opposition to this misguided effort, and reject SB 81 when it comes up for consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William F. Limp". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

William F. Limp, Ph.D.
President