

**AMERICAN NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION**

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UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MONETARY  
POLICY, TRADE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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*Coin and Currency Issues Facing Congress: Can We Still Afford Money?*

Madame Chairperson and members of the Subcommittee, I am Christopher Cipoletti, Executive Director of the American Numismatic Association. I have held this position since January 1, 2003. I have been affiliated with the American Numismatic Association since 1997 serving initially as legal counsel on specific matters and then as general counsel to the Association. I am a life member of the American Numismatic Association. In my capacity as Executive Director of the Association, I also am actively involved with other numismatic organizations working with them to promote collecting and advance numismatic education.

The American Numismatic Association is a federally chartered nonprofit corporation founded in 1891 and chartered by Congress in 1912 (with its charter renewed in perpetuity in 1961). The American Numismatic Association does not receive any federal moneys for its operation and has not received any federal grants for its programs. The mission of the Association is to encourage and educate people to study and collect money and related items by promoting, preserving and protecting the interests of those who desire to discover and explore the world of money. The American Numismatic Association fulfills this mission through its educational programming, numismatic museum, numismatic library, a monthly publication *Numismatist*, major conventions held around the country, consumer awareness and protection activities, among other things. The Association is a membership organization with almost 32,000 members from around the country and the world who have an interest in money and money related items. The American Numismatic Association appreciates the invitation and opportunity to present testimony before the Subcommittee.

Money in its many forms reflects culture, art, science and history. In the United States, our money is a source of documenting historical events, it reflects our values and our culture, and it presents artistic renderings of who we are and what

is important to us as a nation. Numismatists, people interested in collecting coins, paper money, medals and tokens, from around the world have a strong interest in American numismatics. The production of money, with designs reflecting our history and culture, is as important to the numismatic community today as it has always been. Until the recent design changes in American money, the exposure to numismatics as a hobby and as an educational tool was waning.

However, in the last several years, the diminishing exposure to numismatics, particularly through circulating coins and paper money, has turned with renewed excitement in the money produced by the United States. Much of the resurgence in numismatics at the basic level can be attributed to the introduction of the 50 State Quarters Program by the United States Mint which has created an interest in collecting that has not been seen for decades. The changing face of money through redesigns and colorization of paper money produced by the Bureau of Engraving and printing, has furthered the interest created by the 50 State Quarters Program as people of all ages are now looking at and looking for the new look of money and numismatic materials being produced under the auspices of the Department of the Treasury. For more than 40 years, the design of money in the United States was stagnant. With the new efforts from the United States Mint and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, an educational introduction to culture, art and history is being presented in every transaction involving United States currency.

Money is an educational tool that allows us to learn about the struggles in which the country has been engaged; it teaches us about significant events that have influenced the development of a nation; and it allows us to hold and own a tangible asset that has value beyond the denomination of the coin or note. For money to be the educational tool that it has the potential to be, it must be accessible for viewing, research and study. And the development process from design to production of the ultimate designs of United States currency must be available to our entire population serving as an important educational tool.

In order for the excitement and enthusiasm of collecting to be advanced, the American Numismatic Association believes that the United States Mint and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing need to work closely with the collecting community and the general public to determine what designs and what denominations will produce desired results. And they must work to assure that collecting and the education that can be experienced through money is available to people at all levels from those with a passing interest to those with the most serious knowledge and experience with numismatics.

For those who are actively interested in numismatics, rare and interesting material is very desirable. Finding a unique coin or piece of paper money in change that is given piques peoples' interests. It gets people who have an interest in history, culture, art, geography, science and many other disciplines to start thinking about money in a manner that is beyond serving as merely a tool for the purchase of goods or services. With this interest piqued, people begin studying money and its historical significance; they often become serious collectors who are preserving a piece of American culture. Once seriously involved in numismatics, collectors spend billions of dollars annually on numismatic material. But collectors must know that what they are purchasing is authentic and must know that it is legal to own.

The American Numismatic Association is supportive of HR 5077 introduced by Representative Lucas to address numismatic issues. Others have and will comment on the specific language of the legislation. While the American Numismatic Association is not commenting on the specific language of the proposed legislation today, the Association supports the intent of the legislation in creating certainty for the collecting community about numismatic materials. Currently, there are rare numismatic items that are privately owned by individuals who spent hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars to legitimately purchase the materials. Yet ownership is potentially called into question because the numismatic material was not formally released by the Department of the Treasury. The current owners had no role in any claim that the material was wrongfully taken from the Treasury but based upon current law, a significant numismatic investment may be at risk. HR 5077 addresses this issue for pre-1933 issued numismatic material assuring numismatists that they have legitimate ownership and that their ownership cannot be challenged, particularly when new administrations in the Treasury take office and may have an agenda to address items which the Treasury believes were not rightfully released from the Treasury.

The American Numismatic Association also supports the efforts of HR 5077 to provide for funding of the National Numismatic Collection maintained by the Smithsonian Institution. This numismatic treasure is an educational resource that cannot be replaced or surpassed. Since the National Numismatic Collection was dismantled in the summer of 2004, the country and visitors from around the world have been deprived of the educational treasure this collection offers. As noted earlier, numismatic material is a rich source of education in culture, art, science and history. The National Numismatic Collection can and should be used to teach people of all ages. From the history of money to its current day uses, from the minting process to its distribution stream, from the design to determinations about size and metallic content, money serves as an irreplaceable educational asset. Money can be used in practically any educational discipline; but to be effectively used, people must have access to the tangible objects. This requires

that an historical collection be maintained and available for display and exhibition. The efforts of HR 5077 to accomplish this for the National Numismatic Collection must be applauded.

Money is not and will not become obsolete. Rather, it will change form over time as society and culture changes. When we look at the development of money, we have observed many changes throughout history, but the base concept of money, an exchange of items of value in a transaction, remains the underlying concept. And that concept of money continues to provide us with a reflection of who we are as a nation, what we have accomplished, what we hold out hope for and what we see as our future. Making sure that the culture, art and history of money is collected, preserved and maintained for future generations is an important and necessary action.

The American Numismatic Association applauds the Department of Treasury's foresight in changing and allowing changed designs on our money to pique interests in numismatics, to create a network of people who are interested in preserving our culture and our heritage through money. The American Numismatic Association encourages the continued development of new and changing designs on American money. This will continue to keep people interested in money as an educational tool and a collectible item of significant value. The Association encourages the Treasury to be open minded about HR 5077 and the benefits that it could bring to the collecting community, including the fair and equitable access to legitimately purchase and own numismatic rarities that will preserve our history and be available for research and study for many future generations.

The American Numismatic Association wishes to thank the Subcommittee and particularly Representative Lucas for the opportunity to provide this testimony. The Association stands ready to assist in any way that it can to promote, protect and preserve the interests of all people who have a desire to discover and explore the world of money. We are encouraged that the Subcommittee has taken testimony on this issue and we look forward to being able to work with you to develop legislation that promotes numismatics.