

Last night, during the presidential debate in Nashville, Tennessee, Senator John McCain made the following statement:

McCain: "While we were working to eliminate these pork barrel earmarks he (Senator Obama) voted for nearly \$1 billion in pork barrel earmark projects. Including \$3 million for an overhead projector at a planetarium in Chicago, Illinois. My friends, do we need to spend that kind of money?"

To clarify, the Adler Planetarium requested federal support – which was not funded – to replace the projector in its historic Sky Theater, the first planetarium theater in the Western Hemisphere. The Adler's Zeiss Mark VI projector – not an overhead projector – is the instrument that re-creates the night sky in a dome theater, the quintessential planetarium experience. The Adler's projector is nearly 40 years old and is no longer supported with parts or service by the manufacturer. It is only the second planetarium projector in the Adler's 78 years of operation.

Science literacy is an urgent issue in the United States. To remain competitive and ensure national security, it is vital that we educate and inspire the next generation of explorers to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math.

Senator McCain's statements about the Adler Planetarium's request for federal support do not accurately reflect the museum's legislative history or relationship with Senator Obama.

The Adler has approached the Illinois Congressional delegation the last few years for federal assistance with various initiatives. These have included museum exhibitions, equipment and educational programs we offer to area schools, including the Chicago Public Schools.

We have made requests to Senators Durbin and Obama, as well as to 6 area Congressmen from both political parties. We are grateful that all of the Members we have approached, including Senator Obama, have deemed our activities worthy of their support, and have made appropriations requests on our behalf, as they have for many worthy Illinois nonprofit organizations.

As a result of the hard work of our bipartisan congressional delegation, the Adler has been fortunate to receive a few federal appropriations the past couple of years.

However, the Adler has never received an earmark as a result of Senator Obama's efforts. This is clearly evidenced by recent transparency laws implemented by the Congress, which have resulted in the names of all requesting Members being listed next to every earmark in the reports that accompany appropriations bills.

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