



December 14, 2012

Alice Kelly  
Manager  
Department of Transportation  
District of Columbia

Dear Ms. Kelly,

The National Geographic Museum has reviewed the proposed Sign Regulation Authorization Emergency Amendment Act of 2012. While we appreciate this initiative which seeks to improve efficiency in the existing signage permitting requirements, we are seeking an exemption as a non profit cultural institution that provides educational benefits for area residents and also supports tourism in a non federal area of the city.

The National Geographic Museum is a non profit cultural institution that presents exhibitions and live events, attracting approximately 250,000 tourists and area residents to the Golden Triangle neighborhood each year. We have partnerships with the many hotels in this neighborhood, which see us as a convenient and interesting attraction for their guests. In addition, we provide educational programming to area schools and universities, offering free admission to students and youth groups from across the region.

Located within National Geographic's office complex at 17<sup>th</sup> and M Streets, N.W., the Museum has a very elegant banner display at our entrance that helps to identify the Museum within the building and is essential to our visibility. These banners currently do not comply with all of the regulations stated in section 708 of this proposed legislation. We feel that we should qualify for an exemption or be grandfathered in this instance given that we received a D.C. permit for this project when it was installed in 2001.

The nature of our programming, which includes 10-15 annual exhibitions and live events throughout the year, requires us to change out our window signage frequently. Such signage is a vital way to promote our varied programming and serves to distinguish our non commercial offerings in a neighborhood that has many office buildings and other retail businesses. Article 403.1, restricting special signage, and other size related restrictions suggest that our current signage may not be legal under this legislation. There are no real alternative ways of identifying our institution and its changing offerings without such special signage.

Our museum also curates photography exhibitions that are installed in light boxes in our windows. When illuminated at night, these create an engaging attraction for pedestrians on both 17<sup>th</sup> Street and M Street, N.W. Article 403.4 of this proposed legislation would suggest that these exhibitions, which are a popular neighbourhood attraction, would no longer be legal.

In addition, given the volume of the changes we make, the requirements for submission of permit applications in each instance will require a level of administrative oversight and related expense that will inevitably impact the services that we are able to provide.

We hope that you will consider our request to be exempted from some of these regulations.

I would be pleased to discuss our request with you and with our city council representative, Jack Evans, at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathryn Keane".

Kathryn Keane  
Vice President, Exhibitions

cc Jack Evans