

State of Connecticut

SENATE

STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

SENATOR LEONARD A. FASANO
THIRTY FOURTH SENATE DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
SUITE 3400
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

SENATE MINORITY LEADER PRO TEMPORE

CAPITOL: (860) 240-8800
TOLL FREE: 1-800-842-1421
FAX: (860) 240-8306
E-MAIL: Len.Fasano@cga.ct.gov
WEB: www.SenatorFasano.cga.ct.gov

July 3, 2014

John C. Geragosian
Auditors of Public Accounts
State Capitol, Room 116
Hartford, CT 06106-1559

Robert M. Ward
Auditors of Public Accounts
State Capitol, Room 114
Hartford, CT 06106-1559

Dear Auditors Geragosian and Ward:

I write to you out of concern about a lack of oversight of taxpayer dollars that have been approved by the state legislature for Amistad America Inc.

As you are aware, a financial audit of Amistad America is being conducted for the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) by CohnReznick. The due date for the completion of that report has come and gone, and exactly when that report will be submitted is uncertain. When the audit finally does get completed, I respectfully request that your office give this overdue report the scrutiny it deserves. Should you find that the CohnReznick audit does not satisfactorily answer our questions or is incomplete, I ask that your office conduct its own independent audit of Amistad America Inc.

I want your office to know that I am also calling on the Department of Economic and Community Development to suspend any future direct payments to Amistad America pending a satisfactory conclusion of these audits. In addition, I will propose legislation to give state agencies more oversight and ability to place performance conditions on budget line items. A prime example of this is the DECD's budget line item recommendations to the governor's office in a three page memo to Governor Malloy's Chief of Staff, Mark Ojakian by DECD Commissioner Catherine Smith back in September of 2013, which includes funding for Amistad America.

In my opinion, Amistad America has been using state taxpayer funds with little to no accountability to the state. Until we get some answers as to how the taxpayers' money is being spent, we should pull back the appropriation. Otherwise, we are blindly throwing the money into a pit year after year. If the funding is not held back immediately by DECD, Amistad America could receive the funds as early as this month.

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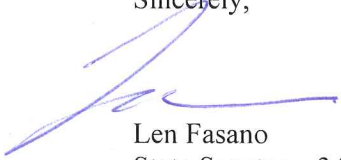
We have all seen the reports of Amistad America owing substantial debts to Connecticut small businesses. Now is the time for action. There are too many questions lingering about where this taxpayer money is going and how it is being used. We, as representatives of state taxpayers, need immediate answers.

The schooner Amistad is an enduring symbol of freedom's triumph.

The replica ship Amistad, which operates here in Connecticut and educates people of all ages from around the world, is a piece of history and a treasure we should protect and be proud of.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Len Fasano
State Senator – 34th District