

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 6, 2003

Mr. Richard A. White
General Manager/Chief Executive Officer
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
600 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. White,

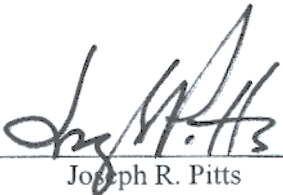
As you know, in recent days there has been a public outcry regarding the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)'s decision to allot free advertising space to Change the Climate, an organization that supports the legalization of marijuana. Subsequently, it is our understanding that WMATA has decided to review its advertising policy and to require that in the future non-profit organizations pay for the use of WMATA advertising space. While this proposed policy change might address some of the fiscal concerns surrounding lost advertising revenue, the larger concerns regarding overall advertising standards remain unaddressed.

As Members of Congress, we are deeply troubled by the Change the Climate advertisements. Not only do these advertisements, some of which were placed near schools, promote illegal behavior, they are also sexually suggestive and violate standards of common decency. As a government entity, WMATA has a responsibility to ensure that its resources are not used in an unseemly manner. In addition, because WMATA is a recipient of federal taxpayer dollars, we in Congress have a responsibility to ensure accountability.

In this regard, we would like to know what steps WMATA will be taking in order to ensure that (1) advertisements do not promote illegal behavior; (2) advertisements do not violate local obscenity standards; and (3) advertisements in public places are appropriate for all ages.


Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


Joseph R. Pitts


Sue Myrick
Chairman, House Republican Study
Committee


Henry E. Brown


Mark E. Souder
Chairman, Subcommittee on Criminal
Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources

PETE SESSIONS
Pete Sessions

Robert Aderholt
Robert Aderholt