

August 13, 2018

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
Secretary of the Treasury
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Mnuchin:

The American Historical Association vigorously endorses suggestions from our members and others that Harriet Tubman be featured on the \$20 Federal Reserve Note. We are aware that such a major change in the currency is not to be taken lightly. As the primary organization representing historians in the United States, and the largest professional organization of historians in the world, we take history itself seriously -- especially the deep influence of everyday portrayals of the nation's past. Tubman's heroic efforts on behalf of enslaved people seeking freedom, and on behalf of the nation's military forces during the Civil War make her an appropriate symbol of freedom and the courageous patriotism required to end a system that former President George W. Bush has referred to as "America's original sin."

Money uniquely occupies national attention, passing from hand to hand, day to day. It symbolizes civic unity, the fellowship of all who participate in our economy and our communities. Half of the people who participate in these transactions are women. As we approach the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment historians are reminded that like women's suffrage in 1920, the inclusion of women in the pantheon of patriotic Americans honored on our currency is long overdue.

The AHA recognizes the complexity of issues relating to currency, including the priority given to security issues. As historians we understand the complexities of historical interpretation when assessing the contributions of specific individuals, along with the inevitable political implications of highly visible changes to elements of civic culture. But we also recognize the imperative of change and its relationship to continuity. The commitment to freedom articulated in our founding documents remains central to American culture and institutions. Harriet Tubman's life and work symbolizes the sacrifices that she and thousands of other Americans have made on behalf of those ideas and the values embodied in them.

Sincerely,



James Grossman
Executive Director