

Dear Representative Chellie Pingree,

I am writing in response to your recent remarks concerning the Statue of Liberty and the inscription associated with welcoming immigrants to the United States. I respectfully ask that our discussion of this monument distinguish between the Statue of Liberty's original French and American history and interpretations that became associated with the monument later.

The historical origins of the Statue of Liberty deserve to be preserved and accurately represented. The monument was conceived by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi and developed as a gift from France to the United States, symbolizing liberty, friendship between the two nations, and ideals associated with American independence. Its artistic influences also drew upon Bartholdi's European heritage and the classical traditions that informed his work.

The words commonly associated with the Statue of Liberty's welcome to immigrants came later. Emma Lazarus was a Jewish and Georgist activist who wrote *The New Colossus* in 1883 to help raise money for the statue's pedestal. The poem was not part of Bartholdi's original conception of the monument, and the bronze plaque bearing the poem was not installed inside the pedestal until 1903, years after the statue was dedicated in 1886.

This distinction does not require erasing Emma Lazarus or the importance her poem later acquired in American culture. Her work has its own place in American history. It does, however, require acknowledging that the poem represents a later chapter in the history and interpretation of the monument rather than the original purpose for which Bartholdi conceived the statue.

For many Americans of French and Acadian heritage, this distinction has particular historical significance. Bartholdi lived through the profound consequences of the Franco Prussian War. France's defeat resulted in the annexation of his native Alsace by the newly unified German Empire, and these experiences formed part of the historical world in which his ideas about liberty, national identity, and Franco American friendship developed.

The Statue of Liberty therefore carries an important French American history that should not disappear beneath later political interpretations. The story of immigration associated with the monument can be taught alongside its original history without replacing the history of its creation. Americans deserve to know when these different meanings entered the historical record and who was responsible for each of them. The truth is the French and Acadians, experienced great harm by later immigration and colonialism, as we are experiencing today from modern colonialism.

I am also concerned about the tendency to merge the monument's original history with later radical political movements and activists. Emma Goldman, for example, was a prominent Bolshevik anarchist who was convicted for conspiring to obstruct the military draft during World War I and was deported from the United States in 1919. She was questioned following President William McKinley's assassination because his assassin, Leon Czolgosz, had attended one of her lectures and said her ideas influenced him, although Goldman was not charged with participating in the assassination.

Goldman's history should be studied accurately in its own context, just as the history of Emma Lazarus should be studied accurately in hers. Neither should be confused with Bartholdi's authorship, the French origins of the monument, or the historical circumstances surrounding its creation. Separating these histories allows Americans to examine each person and political movement on its own record.

For this reason, I respectfully propose that educational materials and interpretive displays associated with the Statue of Liberty clearly distinguish the monument's original French and American historical purpose from subsequent literary, immigration, philosophical, and political interpretations. Visitors should be able to understand the chronology: Bartholdi's conception of the monument, the French American effort that produced it, its dedication in 1886, Lazarus's poem and its later placement within the pedestal, representing Jewish political interpretations that developed afterward.

This is particularly important when elected officials invoke the Statue of Liberty in contemporary immigration debates. When the words of *The New Colossus* are discussed, they should be identified as the words of Emma Lazarus and placed within their proper historical date and context. They should not inadvertently be presented as Bartholdi's original inscription, France's original message accompanying the statue, or the original purpose of the monument.

I therefore ask you, Representative Pingree, to support historically precise treatment of the Statue of Liberty and its French American origins. Immigration is an important part of the monument's later American meaning, but preserving that history does not require obscuring the history that came before it.

As an American of Acadian and French heritage, I believe the history of French America deserves preservation. The Statue of Liberty represents an extraordinary relationship between France and the United States, and the story of the people who conceived, financed, constructed, transported, and erected it deserves to remain visible to future generations.

May truth, justice, peace, and liberty prevail for all Americans. May the Queen of Heaven, the Star of the Sea, be free.

Respectfully,

Dannielle Courchene-Cowdrey
Union of Saints

Message from Congresswoman Chellie Pingree Inbox x

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Dear Dannielle,

Thank you for sharing your views on immigration reform. I appreciate hearing from you on this important issue, and agree that we must address the problems with our current immigration policy.

I believe that immigration reform must be practical, ethical, and enforceable, and will take a concerted effort by all involved to reform current laws to be more fair and effective. If properly utilized, these laws allow us to regulate traffic across our borders and add to the rich diversity of our nation. As immigration patterns change over time, Congress must review our policies to ensure that they meet our evolving needs as a nation.

That being said, it is well past time to re-examine our immigration process to ensure that we enforce the laws that are already in place, better address our nations' workforce needs while protecting the rights of American workers, preserve families, defend our national security, and ensure that those who want to immigrate here legally have the opportunity to do so. In particular, I hope we can create a path to citizenship for young undocumented immigrants who've only known this country as their home.

As you know, in recent years Maine's population has shown little to no growth and the average age has continued to rise, creating gaps in the state's workforce that have dragged down its economy. More than three-quarters of Maine businesses report having difficulty filling open positions. Countering those trends are New Mainers who have enriched our state in many ways, raising families, starting businesses, and filling a vital need in our aging workforce. New Mainers have been a blessing to Maine businesses, and restricting or excluding this source of hard-working, skilled employees threatens the future of our state's economy.

Additionally, I do not believe it is in our state's interest, and not consistent with the values of our nation as inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, to be unduly restricting legal immigration. I disagree with President Trump's actions to reduce U.S. refugee admissions, block immigrants from certain countries from reuniting with their families, separate children from their parents, and restrict the ability of people having a credible fear of persecution from being able to file a claim for asylum. Moreover, I am troubled that these proposals are accompanied by rhetoric that characterizes, without evidence, migrants and refugees as somehow inherently dangerous, giving voice to racist notions that a person's ethnic or national origin, or the language that they speak, determines whether they are a security risk.

Finally, as I work with my colleagues on House Appropriations Committee on funding for the Department of Homeland Security, I hope to reach a bipartisan solution that includes funding to enhance our border security with technology and increased human capabilities.

It is my sincere hope that Congress will soon consider proposals that will create a stronger, more fair, compassionate, and economically sound immigration system. Thank you again for being in touch, and I will keep your thoughts in mind as I work on this issue.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Please do not reply to this message, as this inbox is unattended. To contact me, please visit my website at <http://pingree.house.gov>. If you need immediate help with a federal agency, please call my Portland Office at 207-774-5019 or toll free at 888-862-6500.