

Testimony of Jay W. Johnson before the Subcommittee on Domestic and International Monetary Policy, Trade and Technology on H.R. 3916, The Presidential \$1 Coin Act of 2004.

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you and this committee on this exciting piece of legislation. I say it's exciting because of the reaction I have heard from coin collectors, dealers and folks I have talked to in recent weeks since it was announced. Let me say that, for the most part, all of the reaction has been positive. Naturally, as anyone who's been involved with coin collectors, numismatists and traders in 'the business'...you can also find a lots of varied opinions about any coin re-design, but overall, collectors like the idea of new designs on United States coins. Many have called for re-design for years.

But what I think is an obvious goal of this legislation is more than just coin re-designs. The multiple goals of trying to re-ignite interest in coin collecting...increase the use of the dollar coin in regular circulation...and help promote the educational history of our nation...are all excellent reasons to make changes to even a relatively new coin...like the Golden Dollar or the Sacagawea Dollar.

I can tell you that as Mint Director, I made it one of my goals to be a booster, a promoter and a strong advocate for the Golden Dollar. It debuted prior to my arrival at the Mint with what we all remember was a spectacular TV advertising campaign...and promotion at some stores. Despite this...and for many other reasons...the general public has not seen nor have they used the Golden Dollar coin on a regular circulating basis. Yet, the amazing popularity of the U. S. Mint's "50 State Quarter " series increased the circulation, the personal accumulation, the collectibility and the popularity of not just quarters...but all coins.

That's just one reason, I believe, that this Dollar presidential coin program will help to do much of the same for the little-used Sacagawea Dollar. Also, as a former Member, I can appreciate the 'sense of Congress' language in this legislation which gives the Mint directives to promote the new Presidential Dollar coins in all areas of commerce. I agree there does not have to be an expensive campaign, but it should be a priority of the Mint to use all it's resources do all in can in seeking ways to promote, publicize, push for and work with commercial entities to gain the widest possible use and acceptance of these Presidential Dollar coins.

I know from personal use and my own attempts to promote the use of dollar coins that it can and should be a useful part of all of our circulating coinage. As I am sure you will hear from a representative of the coin machine industry, more and more vending machines, money changers, parking meters, car washes and transportation systems are equipped to use the current size dollar coin. I note the line in the legislation which also suggests equipment which accepts dollar coins be marked so consumers know of this dollar coin acceptance.

Coin collectors...indeed...many in numismatic businesses...have urged for years that there be new designs on American circulating coins. The 50 State Quarter series proved the ultimate correctness of their views. It was an idea that helps generate new revenue for the federal coffers. It also generates new collectors who come to appreciate the story new and old coins tell about our history. And the 50 State Quarters program has generated new pride in history and images in each state as this 10 year program continues to be the most successful coin collecting ever. If the Presidential Dollar coin program can provide just a portion of the success of the 50 State Quarter series, it too will add more needed revenues to our federal coffers...boost our knowledge of Presidential history...and be a another boost to the hobby and business of coin collecting. I should point out that the Mint, in a study of the success of the 50 State Quarters program impact, found hundreds of additional jobs, not to mention, millions of additional dollars reaped by private companies who leaped on the 50 State Quarter bandwagon. So, I think that, in a similar fashion, this Dollar Presidential coin can boost private numismatic revenues as well as the additional revenues coming to the federal government.

I should also mention that, as Mint Director, I met with other Mint Directors from around the world who often looked to the success of the 50 State Quarters program and hoped they could replicate it. I think this Dollar Presidential coin program will make other Mints even more jealous of the innovation and ingenuity of the Congress and the U.S. Mint by, in-effect, following one amazingly successful coin program with yet another one.

I also applaud the legislation for the addition of the bullion part of this Dollar Coin program...and the additional revenues it can bring to the government coffers, as well as interest in innovative coinage from the U.S. Mint. Other Mints of the world produce bullion coinage, but you should know that the U.S. leads all other countries in it's bullion production...and is the most prized of bullion coins. So new, collectible and valuable gold coins can and should be another source of revenue for federal coffers. To those who collect U.S. gold coins...this offers another numismatic

addition as a collectible...as well as another choice for gold buyers who appreciate these gold coins for their beauty AND value.

When I knew I was going to be nominated as Director of the U.S. Mint, I remember telling a friend who said...is there a future is this...how much longer are coins going to be around? Well, I had been doing quite a bit of reading of numismatic literature...books and magazines...and the history of coins, so I told him coins had been around for a long time...and despite the moves to credit cards, smart cards, newly designed paper money and all sorts of substitutes for cash...that coins are much more than small round pieces of metal with images stamped on them. They are a story of our history. They are a touchable, tangible, visible, and highly useful image of the sovereignty of our country. That is why the authors of the U.S. Constitution made sure to create the Mint. It is why coins will always be with us...and these new Presidential Dollar coins will, I hope, join that remarkable numismatic history while at the same time bringing in new federal revenues and expanding the always-true saying that every coin is a 'piece of history in your hands.'