

# NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
Thursday, July 19, 2001

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## **Nader Calls on Rehnquist, Smithsonian Board to Fire Smithsonian Head**

Following a news report that the Smithsonian Institution has offered General Motors the right to name the museum's new transportation hall for \$10 million, Ralph Nader said that Smithsonian Secretary Lawrence Small "has once again brought the Smithsonian to the brink of turning itself into a government-funded Hall of Hucksters. Justice Rehnquist and the Smithsonian Board of Regents should fire Mr. Small immediately, so that he can join a corporate marketing department where he belongs." Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist is the chair of the Smithsonian's Board of Regents.

"This is a man who should be pitching gas-guzzling SUVs, not serving as keeper of the nation's historical artifacts and narrative," Nader said about Mr. Small.

The New York Times reported today that "one name under discussion" by the Smithsonian for the hall is the "General Motors Hall of Transportation."

"This tawdry commercialism has no proper place in government-funded institutions such as the Smithsonian," Nader said. "Mr. Small should be removed for gross incompetence for attempting to convert the Smithsonian into a corporate advertising vehicle."

"The Smithsonian does not exist to serve as an extension of corporate public relations departments," Nader said. "It's bad enough that General Motors and other corporations own Congress. Now they want to own our history as well, and Mr. Small is brokering the deal."

On February 27, Nader and Commercial Alert sent a letter to Mr. Small regarding an event it conducted with K-Mart which "allowed the taxpayer-financed Smithsonian Institution to be used to prop up K-Mart Inc. and its public relations efforts." The letter asked Mr. Small "What limits you have set on the commercialization of the Smithsonian? Would the Smithsonian promote corporations that are polluters? Corporate felons? Tortfeasors? Corporate welfare recipients? Corporations that pay no taxes?"

Mr. Small has faced heavy criticism for his dealings with donors and willingness to commercialize the Smithsonian. According to the New York Times, "In an unusual memorandum sent to the Board of Regents in May, a majority of members of the museum's branch of the congress [of scholars] accused Lawrence M. Small, the Smithsonian secretary, of jeopardizing the institution's integrity with agreements he had reached with multimillion-dollar donors."

The appointment of Mr. Small, a former banking executive, as Secretary of the Smithsonian, broke a 150-year tradition of hiring an academic or scientist to head the

Smithsonian. “Mr. Small is not qualified to run the Smithsonian,” said Gary Ruskin, executive director of Commercial Alert. “Obviously, he doesn’t understand why it is improper to turn the Smithsonian into a GM billboard.”

Ralph Nader founded Commercial Alert to keep the commercial culture within its proper sphere, and to prevent it from exploiting children and subverting the higher values of family, community, environmental integrity and democracy.

Commercial Alert’s website is at <[www.commercialalert.org](http://www.commercialalert.org)>.