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A N T H R O P O L O G I C A L
A S S O C I A T I O N

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
District Office
635 North 1st St., Ste. B
San Jose, CA 95112

September 30, 2008

Dear Representative Lofgren:

I am writing on behalf of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) to express our support for the 'Electronic Device Privacy Act of 2008' (H.R. 6588) that you recently introduced. The AAA was founded in 1902 and is the primary professional society of anthropologists in the United States. With more than 11,000 members, it is the world's largest professional organization of individuals interested in anthropology.

AAA has recently learned that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), through Customs and Border Protection (CBP), has carte blanche to search, copy, and seize private electronic devices, including laptops, of Americans reentering the United States, as well as foreign visitors. These warrantless searches include going over personal contents such as phone and email records. Anthropologists and business executives are equally concerned with this development as confidential data, such as field notes or sensitive business information, could potentially be reviewed. Our discipline places the highest value upon protecting research participants, and these searches represent a breach of the trust and cooperation that have been painstakingly earned throughout years of fieldwork. Dissemination of raw data to anyone besides the researcher(s) violates our discipline's ethical standards and may compromise the safety of our research participants and deter them from providing valuable information and resources to our members.

We understand the importance of maintaining a secure border and protecting Americans, but these objectives can be met without violating Fourth Amendment rights. Our Association would like to speak with your staffer(s) who handles this particular issue so that we can further detail our concerns and help promote your legislation. We will contact you to ensure that you have received our letter and are able to discuss these searches. We thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and ask that you follow up with Mr. Damon Dozier, AAA Director of Public Affairs. He can be reached at (703)528-1902 extension 3008 or ddozier@aaanet.org.

Sincerely,

Setha Low
President