



## THEATRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY of AMERICA

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Honorable Martin O'Malley, Governor of Maryland  
Honorable Sheila Dixon, Mayor of Baltimore  
Maryland State Legislators & Baltimore City Legislators:

For nearly 70 years, The Senator Theatre has served Baltimore as an icon of architectural distinction, cultural excellence and civic pride; a revered and iconic neighborhood movie house whose neighborhood happens to be all of America.

When the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Main Street Center named "historic theaters nation-wide" as their top endangered element of American life, an image of The Senator's stunning facade was used as the attention-getting hallmark representing the mission to "Protect the Irreplaceable".

Truly, The Senator Theatre in Baltimore is one of the most intact and well known examples of the architecture, grandeur and elegance of Hollywood's golden era, when the theatres were themselves attractions along with the films being shown.

Today, we find ourselves at a cross roads for this magnificent, renowned structure. It either remains in day-to-day operation to evolve, or we watch it slip from our American tapestry. In the coming weeks the country will be literally watching Baltimore and the State of Maryland in relation to the precarious fate of the endangered Senator Theatre.

Over the years, America has seen too many of its most exemplary historic theaters go dark primarily due to municipal neglect. It's often from a lack of awareness of the value and support that a unique traffic generating facility like The Senator, with its award-winning, community oriented operation, brings to the neighborhood businesses and to the surrounding residential communities.

Closure of the Historic Senator Theatre would be a crushing blow to a city that takes pride in its unique place in American history. From its inaugural day of operation in 1939 that continues to the present, The Senator heralds the future. Its architectural elements and graceful lines evoke a shining, progressive tomorrow of prosperity and permanence and its elegant Art Deco décor still faithfully reflects the period of optimism and technology in which it was built.

In 2009, The Senator now stands as the only remaining single-screen movie house in Baltimore, a former “City of Theatres”, which once boasted over 150 unique movie houses that served as cultural centers and economic engines, anchoring the heart of the city’s commercial and residential districts.

If The Senator’s owner is not assisted in his efforts and the theatre is allowed to go dark, it will be to the detriment of Baltimore’s historic fabric and economic vitality. An abrupt shutdown of the theatre must be averted, or it will quickly become a regrettable failure of vision and civic responsibility and a resounding loss to the cause of enlightened historic preservation nation-wide.

I urge you on behalf of the citizens of Baltimore City and the State of Maryland and the Board of Directors and the Membership of Theatre Historical Society of America to demonstrate decisive leadership, step up to the challenge, and invest in The Senator Theatre’s vibrant future for the enjoyment of generations to come.

The Senator’s upcoming 70th anniversary is cause for city-wide celebration and a credit to those with the foresight, tenacity and vision to struggle and fight for the theatre’s preservation throughout its history.

Owner Tom Kiefaber and his family have worked diligently for seven decades to protect, operate and preserve The Senator for the citizens of Baltimore. The theatre under Kiefaber’s independent stewardship and guidance is regularly honored in the national arena as a consistent, guiding light for the protection and preservation of America’s remaining Main Street theatres.

Mr. Kiefaber has received numerous historic preservation awards and film industry accolades as The Senator’s devoted owner. We note that through his leadership, the community has been encouraged to become involved and helped to formulate an innovative vision for The Senator Theatre’s future as the premiere, community-owned arts and entertainment venue in the region.

Now is the time to make a public commitment to insure that Baltimore’s beloved and irreplaceable Senator remains in operation and that its owner is assisted in his efforts to transition the theatre to community non-profit ownership and operation. In this way The Senator, “The People’s Theatre,” will remain a continuing source of pride for the citizens of Maryland and for the nation.

Theatre Historical Society of America’s Directors and Members urge you to take swift, significant steps to ensure that The Senator remains in operation and is preserved and protected in perpetuity.

Respectfully,

Karen Colizzi Noonan, President  
Theatre Historical Society of America