

# Rep. Gerlach blasts plans to move Barnes art to Phila.

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U.S. Rep. Jim Gerlach, R-Pa., wants to keep the Barnes Foundation at its home in Montgomery County and prevent it from moving to Philadelphia - and said he will introduce legislation seeking to accomplish that. His bill would impose a penalty on any tax-exempt organization, in this case the Barnes Foundation, for accepting a donation that would be used to move the organization contrary to the intent of the donor, in this case the late Albert Barnes, he said.

"The penalty will be equal to the value of the donation, and prevent any organization from raising money for the purpose of relocating" against the wishes of Barnes, Gerlach, who represents parts of Berks, Montgomery and Chester counties, said at a press conference yesterday in Lower Merion.

"Albert Barnes, the man who assembled this wonderful collection of art at his marvelous home, was meticulously specific in detailing how he wanted his estate to be maintained following his death," Gerlach said. "Moving it to Philadelphia would literally destroy the trust Barnes put in place and make a mockery of his wishes, and an end to Pennsylvania's reputation as a place where estate and property rights are vigorously defended," Gerlach added.

Gerlach - locked in a heated re-election fight against Democratic challenger Lois Murphy - outlined his plans with representatives of the Friends of the Barnes Foundation, an organization that opposes the move.

"Friends" spokeswoman Nancy Herman called taking the Barnes art collection to Philadelphia "an abuse of power and betrayal of the public trust."  
"It will destroy one of the great art institutions in the world, a work of art in itself that cannot be replicated anywhere else." Herman said. "We intend to preserve our heritage and achieve our goal."

The City of Philadelphia has offered the site of the Youth Study Center, a detention center at 20th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, as a location for the foundation museum, and several foundations have backed the move with millions of dollars.

Public relations aides of the Barnes Foundation declined to comment on Gerlach's proposal, saying they didn't know enough about it.