

ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE

A NON-PROFIT FEDERATION OF OVER 300 ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETIES AND 26,000 MEMBERS

- To promote the science of astronomy
- By fostering astronomical education,
- By providing incentives for astronomical observation and research, and
- By fostering communication among amateur astronomical societies.



Charles E. Allen III
President
4005 St. Germaine Ct.
Louisville, KY 40207
+1 (502) 693-5504
chuckallen@gmail.com

May 1, 2026

Jenks Public Schools
205 East B Street
Jenks, OK 74037
Attention: Board President

Dear President Keeling and fellow Members of the Jenks Public Schools:

I am writing this letter in the sincerest hope that you will reconsider your decision to close the Jenks Planetarium at Jenks High School.

By way of introduction, I am president of the Astronomical League, an 80-year-old 26,000-member national federation of approximately 300 astronomy societies and related organizations. I have devoted my non-professional life, since age 12, giving over 600 astronomy lectures and programs to universities, secondary schools, museums, science fairs, libraries, scout troops, societies, and other public audiences. I am also founder of the now-35-year-old National Young Astronomer Award program. These experiences have led me to appreciate the great demand that exists for astronomical education and observing opportunities, especially among the young. In 1992, I co-founded a public observing event at Patoka Lake in Indiana, and that event still draws 200 to 400 people to our telescopes each summer.

I'm not sure those supporting this decision fully appreciate the enormous value that planetariums have in their communities.

First, a planetarium provides a unique opportunity for young and old alike to appreciate the night sky and to understand the nature of the Solar System and the vast universe beyond. Light polluted cities make access to planetariums even more critical today. The young living in and around cities can no longer appreciate the night sky from their backyards as I did when I was young. Worse, increased concerns over child safety make parents understandably hesitant to

allow children to be at dark sky sites miles from home with people they may not know. Planetariums offer a significant and important alternative where parents can accompany their children or know that they are in a protected school environment.

Second, access to dark sky sites is even more limited for minority and underserved members of our communities, and planetariums offer them an equal chance to become fascinated with the sky, the constellations, the planets, and the science of astronomy generally. When you close a planetarium, you close their opportunities to a greater extent than for most. Some years ago, a city-bound black student in New York City, where the night sky is simply not visible, fell in love with astronomy while visiting the Hayden Planetarium. That student was Neil deGrasse Tyson, one of today's most prolific astronomy educators and current director of that same planetarium.

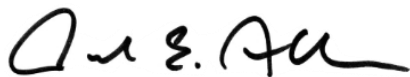
Third, too often administrators look at astronomy as impractical and unnecessary in cash-strapped educational environments, often cutting science and STEM budgets in favor of athletics which never seem to suffer loss of funding. Please realize that astronomy is regarded as an entry science—one that piques student interest in math, chemistry, and physics and leads them into productive careers as engineers, teachers, chemists, physicists, researchers, physicians, and mathematicians—people who are vital to an ever-advancing and more technical society. Facilities that stimulate interest in science should certainly be placed above, or at least on par with, facilities devoted to athletics.

Your high school is blessed to have the Jenks Planetarium. Very few high schools in America are so fortunate. Closing the one you have, and one I am told is excellent in every regard, would constitute a grave disservice to your current and future students and to the wider Tulsa community. It would also evidence a departure from the fundamental purposes for which secondary schools, and their boards of education, exist.

I hope that reason and greater appreciation for the importance of science in our lives will lead you to reconsider this decision and realize that a planetarium, or any facility that expands the mind, is always worth preserving.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. E. Allen III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Charles" and last name "Allen" being more prominent.

Charles E. Allen III