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Curran, Edward: Humanities Chairman Nomination Hearing (1985): Article 02

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Edward Curran may think twice before he again asks the advice of a former White House official. They last time he did, an aide says, it cost him his job.

Curran stepped down Thursday as director of the National Institute of Education because he angered Education Terrel Bell by asking President Reagan to abolish NIE, said Curran's top aid, Lawrence Uzzell.

Uzzell, who quit Friday in protest of Curran's departure, said Curran made the request in a letter to Reagan. He wrote it as the suggestion of Lyn Nofziger, the former White House political director, Uzzell said.

An Education Department spokesman confirmed Curran had resigned the post he held since October, but would not elaborate. Deputy Director Robert Sweet was named acting director of the $55.6 million agency.

Curran, 48, was active in the Reagan campaign and worked in the White House personnel office before taking the $57,500-a-year post. He previously was headmaster of the National Cathedral School, a private school in Washington.

The institute, set up 10 years ago, is the principal federal education research agency. The education research community has charged Curran attempted to inject his conservative political philosophy into areas where it did not belong.

Proprietary to the United Press International, June 12, 1982

Uzzell said Curran wrote Reagan in late May urging NIE be abolished. He said Nofziger suggested the letter in April, four months after leaving the White House to run his political consulting firm.

"We knew that it was a gamble," Uzzell said of the letter. "We hoped if this issue could get personally to the president, he would see the chance to end a federal agency."

Curran and Nofziger could not be reached for comment.

Uzzell said he heard the letter was referred to the Office of Management and Budget for comment. Curran showed the letter to Bell after a staff meeting June 1, he said.

"'How can you head any agency which you think should not exist?'" Uzzell quoted Bell as asking Curran.

Bell then began pressuring Curran to leave, and told him on Wednesday, 'I am terminating you,'" Uzzell said.