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Claiborne Pell

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Opening Statement by Honorable Claiborne Pell, Chairman of the
Special Subcommittee on the Arts

Hearing, August 29, 1962

The hearing will come to order. Today the Special Subcommittee on the Arts is opening a series of hearings on three important proposals which touch directly on the relationship in our society between government and the arts. These hearings result from the initiative and interest of Senators Javits and Clark and the sympathetic understanding and help of our distinguished Chairman, Senator Hill.

We confidently expect in the course of these hearings to receive cogent testimony from a considerable number of expert witnesses concerning the underlying philosophy, general purposes, and specific provisions of the pending measures. We also hope to receive guidance and enlightenment from a wide variety of qualified citizens with respect to the urgent public question of what, in our mid-twentieth century America, the Federal government should be doing, that it is not already doing, to encourage, to stimulate, and to develop an intelligent public interest and participation in all kinds of creative and interpretative forms of arts.

We desire to make this record of testimony not only for the immediate present, in these closing days of the second session of the 87th Congress, but also for reference and research purposes during the recess.

If, because of limited time and the pressure of circumstances, it proves impossible to enact any legislation in the arts field during this session, I feel certain that the subcommittee will be reconstituted next January for the purpose of an even broader and deeper examination of the questions under consideration today. The record compiled in these current hearings will, of course, stand as a solid foundation from which to proceed next year.

The question of a Federal Advisory Council to the Arts, such as proposed in Senator Humphrey's bill, S. 741, pending before us, and in Congressman Thompson's bill, H.R. 4172, which is presently in the House Rules Committee, has been examined by this Committee and by the Senate on previous occasions. There is a considerable body of testimony on this proposal dating from 1956 and 1957. In fact, the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, in 1956, reported former Senator Lehman's bill (S. 3419) providing for a Federal Council on the Arts. The bill passed the Senate on July 5, 1956.

Hearings were also held in 1957 but no further Committee action occurred on the Senate side.

The other two bills under consideration today have not had the benefit of public airing by this Committee. Senator Clark's bill, S. 785, authorizing grants to the States, and Senator Javits' bill, S. 1250, providing for the establishment of a United States Arts Foundation, are, in that sense, new proposals. This Subcommittee is greatly interested in securing testimony on both these important measures, as well as on the more familiar proposal to establish a Federal Advisory Council on the Arts.

Because of the very great public response to the announcement that the Subcommittee was going to hold hearings, we have had to limit the number of witnesses who can appear before the Subcommittee and have requested all others to file statements for printing in the record. I will further ask all the public witnesses to restrict their oral presentation to 15 minutes or less and to submit such supplemental information as they may wish for the record. The record will be kept open until Wednesday, September 5, for the filing of statements.