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The Establishing of State Humanities Agencies:

Examination of a Proposed Amendment

to the Authorizing Legislation of the

National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities

A Briefing Paper
of the
National Council on the Humanities

September 1975

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper the National Council on the Humanities presents an analysis of a proposed amendment to the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act (Section 102 of H.R. 7216 and S. 1800) which would establish an official state government agency in each state to dispense Federal monies in support of the humanities. The resulting appraisal deals with the likely effects of the amendment on the status and progress of the humanities in the United States.

The National Council, charged by Congress with advising in the formulation of national policy in the humanities, considered the provisions of the bill in meetings on August 14-15, 1975. It did so having in mind Senator Pell's comment, when he introduced the bill in May, that the proposed amendment was presented in order to elicit discussion. The National Council believes that the matter is important, and discussion timely. It has therefore welcomed the occasion for a thorough survey of the National Endowment's purposes and methods. This briefing paper is the result, and is intended to be helpful to Senators, Congressmen, and the Chairman of the Humanities Endowment as they approach the formal process of reauthorization.

The issues raised are complex, and a matter of fundamentals; for the Council perceives that the amendment would significantly alter the development and dissemination of humanistic knowledge in this country, with important repercussions on the ability of the National Endowment to carry out the mission assigned it by the Congress. The Council felt obliged, therefore, to go back to definitions, to the nature of humanistic knowledge and the roles played by the arts, the humanities and the sciences in advancing the national well-being. It re-examined the distinctions made ten years ago by the Commission on the Humanities, and then by Congress itself, between the humanities and the arts; the parallels recognized then between the humanities and the sciences; and the various means which are needed to nourish them. It reviewed the means by which national progress in the humanities is secured, and exemplary standards maintained nationwide; and it bore in mind the nation's role internationally as a leader in humanistic scholarship and education. It took stock of just what humanistic resources the nation has had available; how they have (or have not) been developed; and the progress made to date, especially in broader use of the humanities which Congress called for when it amended the Act in 1970.

In this framework the Council considered carefully the degree to which, and the means by which, the administration of Federal funds may be--or has been--most effectively decentralized to support different kinds of humanistic work. This has entailed scrutiny of the growth, purposes and operations of the Endowment's state-based programs, which

in five years have come to involve thousands of professional humanists and millions of ordinary citizens, bringing the resources of the humanities to bear upon the current conditions of life in each state. Throughout, the Council which has helped to spur and guide the nation's humanistic development, has recognized the legitimacy of questions raised by the sponsors of the proposed amendment, and has addressed them with what it hopes is professional rigor and integrity. Its governing criterion has been to search out the amendment's consequences for the humanities themselves and for their role in the enrichment of American society.

I. THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Legislative authority for the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities will expire at the end of the current fiscal year unless it is renewed by the Congress. Two bills which would accomplish this reauthorization have been introduced. One, the Administration bill, seeks simply to extend the current authorization through FY 1979 and leaves unchanged the language of the Act's other provisions. The other bill bears separate designations in the House and the Senate-- H.R. 7216 and S. 1800, respectively--although the two versions are identical.

The latter bill would significantly amend the Act by requiring an official state government agency in each state to dispense Federal monies in support of the humanities. This change, if adopted by the Congress, would be felt immediately in the programs conducted by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and would also affect the totality of humanistic activity in the United States.

The substance of the amendment (which is contained in Section 102 of H. 7216 and S. 1800) can be summarized as follows:

1. Each state government would create an agency, or designate an existing agency, as its official State Humanities Council.
2. Each state would submit to the Chairman of the Endowment a plan which certified that it would expend NEH monies on behalf of any or all of the kinds of activities which the Endowment itself may support.
3. Ten percent of NEH definite funds would be set aside to guarantee each state a minimum of \$100,000 annually. (The effect of the language on the Endowment's current budget would be to set aside approximately \$7.2 million for such distribution.)
4. Federal money could not support more than 50% of the costs of projects funded by a state council.

Although clearly patterned after current provisions of the Act which mandate the state arts councils--(the proposed section is almost word-for-word the same as Section 5(c) which covers the arts councils)--the language of the amendment would in fact permit an organizational structure and operational concepts quite different from those of the arts councils, yet offers no guidance to the states on the nature and purpose of such humanities agencies; nor does it establish what the Endowment's or National Council's role and responsibility vis-a-vis the state councils would be.

In the terms of the amendment, therefore, the state agencies would have the authority to duplicate NEH programs: to support or engage in scholarly research, humanistic education, media cultural activities, museum programs, and the award of fellowships and youthgrants. Thereby the amendment appears to proceed from assumptions about the humanities in the United States which differ sharply from those underlying the creation of the Endowment and the shaping of its programs over the past decade.

II. THE CURRENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HUMANITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

A. Establishment of Federal Support (NEH)

The history of the NFAH Act makes clear that the Humanities Endowment was founded to redress an imbalance in the production and dissemination of knowledge in this country. An elaborate and costly system had evolved on behalf of science without any counterpart for the humanities. Spearheaded by Federal agencies aiding basic research (such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health), and reinforced by dozens of agencies supporting applied research, an extensive national network for scientific research, training, and education, claiming \$15-\$20 billion of Federal tax dollars a year, had become a fact of American life.

Unlike Federally supported efforts in many areas of national life, scientific research has not been considered a matter which should be left to, or even contributed to by, the 50 states. Rather, through their actions, Presidents and Congressmen have indicated that the production of scientific knowledge was a national affair, important to the citizenry at large; accordingly, the national government assumed a position of leadership in fostering the scientific enterprise. It was this precedent which guided the 1964 Commission on the Humanities in its report and recommendations--specifically, the recommendation that Congress establish a humanities counterpart to the National Science Foundation. The Commission--sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies, the Council of Graduate Schools, and the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa--received wide national support, enabling Congressional leaders, with the President's endorsement, to win adoption of the NFAH Act in 1965.

B. Similarities Between Scientific and Humanistic Work

There are a number of key comparisons between the sciences and the humanities of which the Congress was aware when the Endowment was created, and which remain true today:

1. A major investment in science and humanities instruction is made by state and local governments through support for elementary, secondary, and higher education; such investments

cost billions in state and local taxes, and reflect the perspectives and priorities of each state and local jurisdiction. The bulk of Federal support is concentrated on areas where state and local governments are not active (such as research, and national programs aimed at the general public irrespective of place of residence), rather than on "counterpart" Federal activities to match or relieve local tax burdens. For both science and the humanities, national needs have been the criteria.

2. For scholars and teachers in the humanities, as in the sciences, the prime point of reference in the search for truth is not geographical or jurisdictional, but rather the informed analysis of professional colleagues throughout the nation and the world. Accomplishment almost always is based upon accumulated knowledge contributed by hundreds of individuals. No one can write a history or literature textbook from scratch, but must consult the prior work of humanists spread throughout the country, indeed the world. The context of humanistic and scientific knowledge is national, even international.

3. Finally, in science and the humanities the United States has, in comparison to other countries, by far the largest number of trained professionals. The nation thus has a leadership capacity at international levels in a number of humanistic disciplines: for example, our scholars of Asian history and culture are not merely a national asset, they are a resource of world-wide importance. Indeed, outside of the study of Europe itself by Europeans, American expertise on almost every aspect of the human past is unmatched by any other nation. Maintaining that leadership was an important objective sought by creation of the Humanities Endowment and its National Council.

C. The Arts and the Humanities

According to those legislators who worked to pass the NFAH Act, it was administrative convenience coupled with political necessity which joined the humanities and the arts together in a National Foundation. That the humanities constituted something quite different from the arts was, however, written into the original Act not merely in definitions, but in the kinds of activities authorized; in the composition of the two separate Councils advising the Endowments; and most significantly, in the mandating of state arts agencies and the omission of a similar mandate for the humanities.

Despite these distinctions, the Humanities Endowment--perhaps because of the greater visibility of the arts--has in the popular view sometimes been seen as a twin of the Arts Endowment; the humanities

became closely identified with (some even thinking them another name for) the arts. This identification was reinforced as some state arts councils, given birth by the NFAH Act, were called "arts and humanities councils," although no concrete objectives outside of the arts were stated for them in their states' legislation.

It is thus important to recall that the creation of humanities counterparts to the state arts groups was, in 1965, considered inadvisable by the Act's framers. The arts were seen primarily as performance-oriented activities, springing from the work of their individual creators to serve in presentation to the general public. Work in the humanities, on the other hand, while also serving the broad society, does not always do so directly or immediately: humanistic work is in many ways closer to scientific work in that humanities scholars produce knowledge, which may be used as input in the work of other scholars or transmitted as information needed to educate the young.

To these two uses of knowledge, the Congress added for the humanities a third--an explicit public use, discussed below.

D. The Endowment, the Nation, and the States

Given NEH's mission of building up America's humanistic resources as the National Science Foundation had done for science, the National Council on the Humanities has from the beginning recommended programs of national scope and application. Thus the Endowment has always fostered scholarly research, better teaching, exemplary curriculum development, and country-wide programs to bring humanistic knowledge to the general adult public, for example through museums and national television. These activities are the base upon which NEH has also built up what is now a going concern in all 50 states--that is, the state-based, volunteer committees which share one fundamental purpose: to make Federal seed-money available for home-grown, grass-roots projects bringing the humanities to bear on "the current conditions of national life" as they manifest themselves in state-wide contexts.

In its advisory role the Council has helped shape the Endowment's operating procedures to reflect these national purposes, taking account of two factors: (1) the limited funding available to advance the humanities--a condition permitting only the most urgent work to be supported--and (2) the need to assure that all work would add to or utilize the existing stock of knowledge--a goal requiring an evaluation process involving the most informed and objective judgments in the nation.

This process of competitive application and review--pioneered by NSF and NIH--has enabled NEH to achieve new levels of strength in all

its grant programs through a national exchange of personnel and ideas, measured against national standards, while still responding to the individual public interests of every state.

III. IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

While the full consequences of the proposed amendment cannot be foreseen, the Council wishes to note several specific effects that will almost certainly occur--affecting the humanities in general, the Endowment, and the volunteer humanities committees now operating in the 50 states.

A. Impact on the Humanities

One of the purposes put forth on behalf of the amendment is to extend public interest in the humanities and provide formal institutional support in every state for the Endowment itself. But in the Council's view this admirable objective is at odds with the context in which the humanities operate. The proposed bill assumes:

-- that humanistic activity is like artistic activity and amenable to the same institutional framework;

-- that institution of new governmental bodies operating at the state level will more efficiently channel Federal funds to the local, grass-roots level than existing mechanisms do;

-- that official state councils will be more responsive to the diverse needs of the state's population than a volunteer state committee can be;

-- that a peer review process which takes the bounds of a state as its perimeter will retain the confidence of the humanistic community; and

-- that the nation's need for sound scholarship, for exemplary curricula, for quality public programming, and for new applications of humanistic knowledge will be unharmed by fragmenting the Federal tax dollars available for these purposes.

Such fragmentation could incidentally result in support for interesting activities and for neglected subjects of investigation which do not always acquire the highest priority in the national perspective. More significantly, however, the calling into being of 50 new entities in jurisdictions not traditionally responsible for fostering the humanities in the United States (and without that clear focus for their activities which is presently held by each of the volunteer state

committees), must inevitably imply the parochialization of research and teaching, the duplication of experimental efforts, and the gradual dismantling of national strength in the humanities. This prospect is undoubtedly the reason why no national government in the world has fragmented support for the humanities or the sciences in the way that the language of the amendment proposes.

Unlike the arts situation in 1965, no state now has an official agency responsible specifically for the humanities*; and it is important to note that the proposed amendment would enable any existing state agency to be designated as the state's humanities council--regardless of its orientation. In terms of actual programming, a number of agencies within a given state could advance a reasonable claim to exercise the humanities responsibility. Claimants might include state systems for higher education, state museums, state libraries, educational television authorities, or state divisions of archives and history--although some of these agencies have missions which lie primarily outside the humanities, while others are concerned with only a limited aspect of humanistic work. (Recognizing this, the National Council has welcomed applications from state agencies for specific projects, but has advised against on-going general operating support).

It is unlikely that the cause of the humanities would be strengthened if they were entrusted to any such state institutions with already established primary goals; nor would it be desirable to divert them from their long-standing missions. On the other hand, an all-purpose state humanities agency would overlap with, and therefore somewhat duplicate, activities of existing state agencies like these. Thus, rather than generating favorable attitudes among legislators and the public toward new or increased state support of the humanities, a newly created agency could have the opposite effect.

State agencies might indeed appear to be a means of adding to the political base of the humanities. But as the Council sees it, humanistic activities themselves--their quality and extent--are the key to a broader constituency. In fact, the Endowment's growth offers many proofs of this, in the kinds of scholarly, educational and public programs which, in a non-partisan environment with Congressional oversight, have become increasingly valued by both the general public and the humanistic community during the past ten years.

* Eleven state arts councils do carry the title "arts and humanities councils;" but these groups have--properly, in view of their legislative mandate--concentrated their operation and budget on artists and the performing arts. It may also be noted here that in two states, arts and humanities councils were, on an experimental basis, given the initial responsibility by NEH for state-based programming; this was subsequently terminated at the request of those councils, and they were replaced by independent volunteer committees.

B. Impact on the National Endowment for the Humanities

Among the foreseeable effects of the proposed change on the Endowment, this stands out:

The National Council will remain responsible for affirming national priorities, and the Endowment will remain responsible for national programs; yet both will be charged with oversight of activities, taking place in 50 states, which will not necessarily be focussed on national needs nor responsive to common standards. The National Council's responsibility for review and recommendation on state plans will be unclear and evaluation difficult, although by law the Council must make a recommendation before awards may be made.

At the present time, all citizens and institutions, provided they meet certain basic criteria, may apply to NEH programs on an equitable basis, knowing that it is the comparative merit of their projects--judged by nationally respected experts--which will determine NEH response. The criteria for evaluating applications have had a clear logic and resulting integrity: projects must, before any other considerations enter in, satisfy standards of quality and purpose that are valid because they apply nationally.

Such standards are not compatible with a situation in which--as is likely should the amendment take effect--certain state humanities agencies determine to concentrate their Federal allocation on one particular kind of activity, like research grants or fellowships, for example. It would not be wise or fair for NEH to continue its own fellowship programs if half of the states instituted fellowship awards open only to scholars residing in their state: thus scholars outside of those states will be denied the opportunity to receive Federal support for projects which would have served the national interest.

Where state agencies determine their individual priorities in humanistic work, the National Endowment will be forced to consider where an applicant is from and the relative availability of support from his own state agency, rather than simply the relative value of the proposed work. In this kind of situation--doubtless further compounded by inevitably shifting emphases in the state agencies--the Council will not confidently be able to identify for the Chairman (and through him for the Congress) the most pressing priorities and the most appropriate forms of Federal support; nor will the Endowment be able to assure to everyone an equitable chance for Federal funds.

These administrative difficulties are not insurmountable; adaptation can be made, although at some expense in efficiency. However, they must inevitably impair, in the eyes of humanists, the integrity of both state and Endowment procedures and criteria; and, in the eyes of the public, they will cast doubt on the impartiality and efficiency governing Federal funding of the humanities. The development of public and scholarly confidence in the capacity of a Federal agency to act fairly and effectively was not easily nor swiftly earned. For this reason, the National Council is sensitive to any action which can undermine the carefully built support of that agency.

C. Impact on Volunteer State Humanities Committees

Although the proposed amendment does not require the abolition of volunteer state humanities committees and their replacement by state agencies, it is difficult to imagine that both approaches could exist within the state. Duplication of effort between the two structures would seem inevitable and tax-payers at both the state and Federal level would properly object to the use of public funds for three levels of humanities activity--the Federal, state, and volunteer--particularly when all three will seem to have similar objectives and programs.

Our judgment is that as the Congress resolves this matter it will--in fact must--face the choice of abolishing the existing structure, or allowing it to continue and that to allow it to continue means relinquishing the intent, substance, and wording of the proposed amendment. For these reasons, and because there is some indication that the proposed amendment intends to replace the state volunteer effort with a state government effort, the following analysis weighs the accomplishments of the present volunteer approach. To place this in context, a description of the present volunteer effort is first necessary.

Purpose of the Volunteer State Effort

Three related objectives led to the establishment of volunteer citizens' committees for the humanities in each state.

The first objective was to relate the nation's resources in the humanities to the problems and choices which American society faces, in a useful and explicit way. It was the perception of Congress, and of the humanities community, that the great issues on the national agenda were not resolvable by technical and scientific knowledge alone; that they also required examination from the viewpoint of our past (history), the viewpoint of human values (history, literature, philosophy), and the viewpoint of logic and reason (philosophy, jurisprudence) as opposed to emotion and divisiveness--and above all that they needed a

deeper perspective than that of the immediate crisis and short-run technical "solutions." Thus, in amending the NFAH Act, Congress instructed the Endowment to give "particular attention to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life."

A second objective shared by Congress and the National Council was to make humanistic knowledge available to the general public in a useful way--not just in the schools and colleges, but in the community, the home, the place of work. It was perceived (correctly, in 1965, when the Endowment was established) that a limited number of affluent and educated adults had access to the humanities, while the great majority had virtually no sustained or useful access to one of the nation's striking areas of world leadership--the humanities.

A final objective was to broaden grant-making in the humanities so that the use of Federal dollars would reflect perceptions at the grass-roots level of our country.

These objectives were something new in the national experience and in the fields of the humanities. Experiments were thus necessary with university extension units, with state agencies, and with broadbased volunteer citizens' committees--from which it became clear that the volunteer-committee approach was the only one suited to attaining all objectives. State agencies had difficulty in dealing with broad public issues without advocacy, and in distinguishing between the humanities and other areas; university extension units had difficulty reaching beyond their traditional clientele to a broader public and establishing community participation in grant-making.

Besides having none of these disabilities, the volunteer approach had an advantage beyond price: because they wanted to be involved in these objectives, and were free of competing organizational priorities, the volunteer state committees could give their full energies and attention to realizing the goals set by the Congress--goals which required arduous developmental work in each state, and which required an extraordinarily broad range of experience among the membership of the volunteer state committees.

The result is that the Endowment has, since 1971, worked with and through volunteer state citizens' committees, initially in six states and now in all 50. The committees apply to the Endowment for Federal grant funds, which they then regrant to local institutions and organizations across the state. At no level of this process is participation coerced; the volunteer committee makes its own judgment about the level of energy and dollars appropriate to its state, and requests funds from the Endowment accordingly; at the local level each institution or organization makes its autonomous judgment as to whether it wishes to mount a

humanities project focussed on the needs of its community, and applies to the state committee accordingly.

Typically, state volunteer committees include prominent members of community organizations throughout the state; representatives of labor, business, and other important sectors of the public; geographic distribution reflecting urban and rural interests; representation from ethnic and minority publics important in the particular state; scholars in the humanities from institutions of higher education; and leaders of humanities-related institutions such as libraries, museums, colleges and universities.

All grants made by the state volunteer committees aim at supporting projects for the general adult public; they do not, for example, support research and teaching activities in the humanities--which receive operational support of specific programs at the state level and may compete for programmatic support at the Federal level. All grants address genuine public issues from a humanistic perspective and in a non-partisan, non-advocacy framework.

As each volunteer state committee makes application annually for a "new" grant from the Endowment, the National Council on the Humanities, aided by outside reviewers from the public and from the world of scholarship, undertakes a careful review of past work--of how effectively the general public was reached by the committee's grants, with what emphasis on the humanities and objective discussion of public issues, how representative the committee membership was in terms of perspectives within the state, and how adequate the committee's fiscal and accounting procedures were. On the basis of this review, further funds are provided, and occasional suggestions are made drawing on relevant experience of the other volunteer state committees.

Accomplishments of Volunteer State Programs

The above organization and procedures have enabled the National Council and the volunteer committees to build--in the brief span of four years--a record of accomplishment that the Congress should find gratifying:

1. Operating volunteer committees exist in all 50 states, and will be extended to the remaining jurisdictions in FY 1976; almost 1,000 Americans serve without pay (i.e., without cost to the state or Federal taxpayer) on these volunteer working committees, in addition to the thousands more who volunteer assistance as individual project directors, sponsors, and resource personnel.

2. In the four completed years of the program, volunteer committees have supported 3,500 projects in 9,000 American communities, reaching an audience of over 20 million Americans and involving over 10,000 scholars in the humanities. In fiscal 1975 alone, the state committees supported over 1,700 projects across the nation.

3. The volunteer committees have spent over 28 million Federal dollars during the past four years without a single criticism of their fiscal management; in fiscal 1976 the Endowment plans to allocate over \$15 million of its appropriation to the volunteer committees.

4. The above \$28 million in Federal funds have been matched by more than \$30 million of private and local money from individuals, corporations, foundations, institutions and organizations--who have borne over half the cost of committee-supported projects because they believe they had value; not because the taxing power of the state was in use.

5. Most state committees have incorporated as non-profit groups under their state's laws; have adopted charters and by-laws which provide for representative membership and rotation of membership according to stated terms, and which provide for public access to virtually all aspects of their operations; and have established firm regulations to ensure financial responsibility and accountability.

6. State volunteer committees have begun to mount cooperative regional programs to use resources more effectively, and to knit together the public across state lines; and they have initiated a nation-wide self-evaluation process which ensures that the experience of all states can be available to a particular committee as it reviews its work.

7. In four years of operation, no substantial concern has been expressed at the level of state government, or by the public in the states, that the procedure or objectives were inimical to the state, that the purpose could be better served by an alternative method, or that the volunteer committees were either unrepresentative or one-sided in their membership or their grants. To the contrary, the reception of this approach in the states has been enthusiastic, and the volunteer committees have rather quickly established cooperative arrangements which permit them to work closely with both state and private agencies who may share mutual interests.

Thus--the point without which all the other accomplishments are meaningless--the volunteer committees have genuinely achieved the Congress' objectives, and need only the Congress' sympathetic continued support to

serve still further: the nation's adults have been provided access to the humanities in a manner and to an extent unprecedented in this country; the humanities have been applied to the current conditions of national life in formats which the public (including the leaders in state government) have found useful and important; and the perception of ordinary Americans keen to the needs of their states has been brought to bear upon the grant-making process.

It appears to the National Council that the program of the volunteer committees is not merely the most dramatic new achievement in the humanities since the Endowment was created; it is also an exemplary program of the Federal government which is successfully witnessing to and supporting the traditional American democratic values of rational discussion, community participation, and informed individual choice.

Some Consequences of Changing to a State Agency Approach

The replacement of volunteer committees by state agencies would, the Council believes, have a number of undesirable consequences:

1. The Council thinks it unlikely that the energies of volunteers (which seem crucial in achieving the Congress' intent) can be replaced--unless greatly increased funds for overhead are made available--by the more rigid approach of a statutory public agency at either the state or Federal level; after all, state volunteer organizations were created precisely in recognition of the inherent limitations of the Humanities Endowment as a statutory public agency.

2. A creative element of the existing volunteer program is its independence and freedom from political consideration, however legitimate such considerations may otherwise be. The present program succeeds in dispassionate examination of public issues in each state with the help of the humanities--whereas it seems unlikely that a state agency could avoid the appearance of advocacy, either in its grants or in personnel appointments to its board and staff.

3. Based on actual experiences, it is clear that at least in some states existing private funds would be less available, for in some instances they would not be legally available to a state agency. These withdrawn funds would have to be made good by the state itself if the program were not to reduce its scope and effectiveness.

4. Replacement of volunteer efforts by a statutory apparatus would increase the operating cost of current programs--and this at a time of unusual economic stringency.

5. At the most practical level, some consideration must be given to the fact that each of the existing 50 state volunteer committees believes the proposed change would disrupt or cripple the kinds of community-based programs which have been developed. The Endowment's advisory group of chairmen of state volunteer committees has unanimously and formally expressed both their appreciation for the past support of the Congress, and their hope that the program can continue in its present form.

In sum, the likely result of the proposed amendment would be to dismantle the structures through which the volunteer committees have made such impressive progress in relating humanities scholarship and resources to a broad public. To do this would be to abandon an imaginative experiment in government--the establishing of a voluntary partnership between the ordinary citizen and a Federal agency, and thus ultimately between those citizens and the Congress which gave birth to the underlying concept of such communication.

IV. CONCLUSION

Throughout its consideration of the proposed amendment, the National Council on the Humanities has kept in mind the implications for the development and dissemination of humanistic knowledge in the states and nationally, for all of the current programs of the National Endowment, for the existing volunteer state activities, and for the Council's own legislated role of advising in the development of Endowment goals and priorities.

The Council looked first of all to the broadest context of the humanities. The context assumes that support for the discovery and dissemination of humanistic knowledge is, like comparable work in the sciences, a matter of national interest: it knows no state or regional boundaries, and is therefore best encouraged through national competition and review, to ensure the highest level of progress nationally and the most efficient distribution of Federal resources. To proceed otherwise would be to invite inequities, to dissipate accepted standards of quality, and to fragment humanistic scholarship and education.

At the same time, the present NEH "state-based" volunteer program has quite evidently fulfilled the intent of the Act where it calls for bringing the humanities to bear on "current conditions of national life." It has done so by linking scholars and the adult public in addressing issues of wide concern within each state, working at the grass-roots level through independent volunteer bodies representing a variety of

community interests. To interpose another level of bureaucracy, in the form of a state agency, would counter this decentralization and incur additional administrative expense. In many instances it would draw off the local funds now being generated on behalf of humanistic activities; and, in the last resort, it would disrupt what is a unique program of citizen participation and an unusual example of the accomplishments of Federal-private partnership within each state.

The Council is now persuaded that mechanisms developed over the past ten years by the National Endowment are extraordinarily effective and relatively economical; and that the Congressional reauthorization process provides a satisfactory means for scrutiny of the Endowment's accomplishment, for evaluation of its methods, and for assessment of national progress in the humanities. It is not clear--the Council concludes--that the proposed amendment would improve upon present practices. On the contrary it could, even under optimum circumstances, impair future progress in the humanities--within the states and nationally.

It is a virtue of the proposed amendment that it has compelled a review of such complex matters. Certainly, a continuing public dialogue is required if "the Nation's high qualities as a leader in the realm of ideas and of the spirit" are to be assured. In welcoming that dialogue, the Council must, however, conclude that the amendment will not serve the best interests of the humanities in the nation or within the states.