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## Conference Position Paper (1976): Speech 02

Claiborne Pell

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OPENING STATEMENT BY SENATOR CLAIBORNE PELL AT JOINT HEARINGS  
BEFORE THE SPECIAL SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ARTS AND HUMANITIES  
AND THE SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

November 13, 1975

The Joint hearing of the Senate Subcommittee on Arts and Humanities and the Select Subcommittee on Education of the House of Representatives will come to order.

Today our hearing will be on that portion of S. 1800 which extends the life of the NEH for a four-year period. I think that I can say without fear of contradiction that no one here objects to a four-year extension of the Endowment's life. However, there has been controversy concerning my amendment, which sought to establish in law state humanities councils.

Perhaps a little history will be helpful in order to understand exactly why this amendment was put forth.

In 1964 and 1965, when we were discussing the establishment of an Endowment, the question of state involvement was raised. Dr. Barnaby Keeney, President of Brown University, who became Chairman of the Endowment, informed me that the humanities were really not ready to handle such a program and that it would be unwise to legislate it.

In 1968 I again raised the question of state-based councils and was again told that the time was not yet right. The question came up again in 1970, and Wallace B. Edgerton, the Acting Chairman at that time, agreed with Dr. Keeney's previous view that a mandated program was not feasible. However, he did agree to set up some type of pilot project, and

the Senate report that the year reflected this development. Wallace Edgerton was true to his word, and pilot programs were established.

In 1973, Dr. Ronald Berman, then Chairman, appeared before us. We again spoke of the concept of state-based humanities councils, and he informed us that, in comparison with the initial six state programs, there were then approximately 40. Therefore, the legislation did not contain mandatory language, but, again, the Senate report reflected our deep interest and concern in these matters.

When I was drafting this year's reauthorization bill, it was clear to me that there were viable programs in all 50 states, and therefore, legislation was introduced which would enact into law that which had been done in a voluntary manner. The purpose of my amendment was this: to give each state humanities council a life of its own, a guarantee of a percentage of funding, and a guarantee that it would be its own master in planning its own programs. A program of state humanities committees such as the present one, while it may have advantages, still carries with it the problems of the anointing by some Federal official of chosen people within the state who must pay very close attention to a Washington base. It is like a laying on of hands, and the anointed chairman similarly lays his hands on others.

My amendment would give the state councils an independence from this type of procedure, which has an element of Federal control. Each state could design its own program to fit its own needs and not just be an entity ordained from Washington.

Since introduction of an amendment, there have been many letters and comments against my proposal. Unfortunately, they all seem to say the same thing, which leads one to think that there was a certain amount of orchestration in the opposition to this amendment. The latest, and perhaps the most unreasonable, is the argument that this amendment would decentralize all programs of the NEH. This, of course, is nowhere in the legislation. There have been other arguments. Two seem most important to the participants.

The first is the parochial one with regard to the existing programs and how they would be hurt if they became part of a state political process. It well may be true that a state may choose other people to run its program than would an agency in Washington. Nevertheless, one can argue, that states do have a right to choose who should conduct programs within their own boundaries.

The second most popular minor argument seems to come from the academic community and suggests that enactment of my amendment would a) decentralize the humanities and b) subtract from overall quality. In contrast, I see no reason why a national

program with national goals cannot be operated along with a local program with maintenance of the same level of quality in both.

As I plainly stated in introducing my amendment, I intended to elicit discussion.

I have yet to hear arguments which convince me that I am not right in my proposal. Indeed the more I examine this situation, the more I feel I am on the right track. I have asked a great many Senators simple questions: Who is chairman of your state arts council? Most know the answer. And, then I ask who is Chairman of your State Humanities Committee? They do not know. And all this leads one to believe that the Arts have done a far better job than the Humanities in developing diversified, popularly-supported, constructive programs at a grass roots level. I mentioned yesterday that I believe we should carefully review the question of equal funding for the Endowments. One seems to have generated great momentum--the other at this time in my view appears, in comparison, to have lagged behind.

I welcome discussion on these points.

I welcome the discussions we will have today. And I am pleased now to ask Dr. Ronald Berman, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, to present his views, and to continue the discussion.