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State Humanities Committees (1979-1982): Note 01

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NOTES FOR SEN. STAFFORD
on the Markup of
The Reauthorization of the National Foundation on
the Arts and the Humanities

- The cost of administering the volunteer state humanities committee has been very low. State Arts Agencies spend, on a national average, \$.50 of every NEA dollar to administer their agencies. The state humanities councils spend between \$.15 and \$.25 per NEH dollar for administration, with the average around 20-22%.
- In spite of this low overhead, the humanities councils emphasize their relationship to the public and provide more comprehensive and prompt response to public inquiries and requests for project support.
- Providing funds to a state that "designates" or "creates" (as would be mandated by S1386) an agency to be the recipient of NEH funds does nothing to assure that these funds will institutionalize the long-term presence of public humanities activities in a state.
- State government funding is not going to be forthcoming in the majority of states, either to volunteer committees or to state agencies.
- There is now a very real prospect that the volunteer state humanities committees will win significant private-sector (corporate, foundation) support in the next 1 to 5 years. Indications are that this private support could provide amounts equal to 25% to 50% or more of the NEH state program funds within the next five years. Most will be business and corporate contributions. If the state governments, instead of volunteer nonprofit committees run this program, prospects for corporate support will be utterly destroyed.
- One more 5-year period of authorization (as would be mandated by S1404) will provide an adequate test of the state committees capabilities and staying power, and will reveal the success or failure of their recently begun efforts to generate significant private-sector funding of their activities.