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Institute of Museum and Library Services Act: Press Releases (1996): Speech 03

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OUTLINE FOR PRESS RELEASE - MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES ACT

Senators Claiborne Pell (D-RI), Ranking Minority Member of the Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts, and Humanities, and Jim Jeffords (R-VT), Chairman, announce the passage of Title VII, the Museum and Library Services Act of 1996, on the Omnibus Spending Act. This title amends the Museum Services Act and consolidates the Institute of Museum Services and the Library Services and Construction Act, transferring all library programs from the Department of Education to the Institute of Museum and Library Services within the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities.

The Institute shall consist of an Office of Museum Services and an Office of Library Services with the directorship alternating every four years between an individual with special competence with regard to museum services and an individual with special competence in library and information services. To assure a smooth transition, the first Director will be the current Director of the Institute of Museum Services. The Offices are authorized for fiscal year 1997 at \$28 million and \$150 million, respectively.

The library program changes significantly from its present form. Focus under this legislation will be on two program areas -- technology and access, and services to special constituencies with an emphasis on people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to people with limited functional or information skills. The vast majority of funds will be provided to State library administrative agencies for State-based programming. Funds will also be used for national leadership grants

or contracts to enhance the quality of library services nationwide and to provide coordination between libraries and museums. The merger of libraries into the expanded Institute will give them greater strength and visibility than under their current status within the Department of Education. By stressing partnerships between libraries and other institutions and agencies, states will gain greater flexibility under the new Act to use the funds to meet the specific needs of their libraries with regard to electronic linkages and other technologies, and to better target their services to their underserved populations.

As with its predecessor, the Institute of Museum Services, the Office of Museum Services will provide grants that go solely toward the general operating support of our nation's art, history, and science museums, strengthening them in the area for which it is most difficult to raise private funds. A significant percentage of the federal funds will be used for educational activities, bringing instruction and joy to millions of Americans of all ages in every state. Other funds will be used to assist museums in modernizing their methods and facilities so that they are better able to conserve the cultural, historic, and scientific heritage of the United States and to serve their increasing use by the public.

POSSIBLE PELL QUOTES:

“Museums and libraries have been working quietly together for several years. This act recognizes the successful partnerships that have transpired and encourages future productive collaborations to the benefit of Americans in every corner of our nation.”

“This new act will enable communities across the nation to provide the new technologies necessary so as to compete effectively in the years ahead, and give our citizens the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for a successful future.”

“Throughout my career in the United States Senate, the arts and libraries have been among my highest priorities. To my mind, both the arts and libraries are the linchpins to lifelong learning. As I leave the Senate, I take heart that today there appears to be widespread consensus that the Federal Government has a unique responsibility to provide assistance to the arts and to libraries. I remain committed to doing what I can to help build upon that consensus in order to achieve our common goal of even greater recognition and support for enhancing museum and library services. “

QUOTE FROM BARBARA WEAVER, Director, Rhode Island Department of Library Services:

“I am delighted to learn of the passage of the Museum and Library Services Act of 1996. It is a tribute to the hard work and determination of the library community, as well as to the long-standing commitment of supporters like Senator Pell, that this landmark legislation has reached fruition. The new Act emphasizes the role of library programs as major partners in the cultural and intellectual life of the country. We welcome this new partnership with museums and other cultural agencies as we move toward universal access to information through libraries.”

QUOTE FROM JIM JEFFORDS:

“Museums are visual libraries. In communities across the nation, museums and libraries provide innovative and exciting educational opportunities to individuals of all ages. It is my hope that by expanding this partnership at the national level, museum and library services will be more widely available and better able to meet the needs of the 21st Century, with the goals of introducing more people to the magic of reading, the joys of learning, and the treasures that are part of our cultural heritage.”

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Bill: Please clear with Mark before you release. The release, obviously, should come after the Senate vote! Many thanks.