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## National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities (1965-1967): Editorial 02

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# Editorials

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Tuesday  
June 7, 1966

## The General Assembly put politicking into the arts

Are the democratic arts or Democratic arts to flourish in the state? The Rhode Island Cultural Arts Commission established at the last General Assembly session gives one pause to wonder.

The state already has a seven-member Advisory Council on the Cultural Arts, appointed by Governor Chafee. What is the need for this new body, five of whose nine members are to be state legislators? What is to be the role of the governor's advisory council, now that the arts commission exists?

Is the answer so simple as political rivalry between a Democratic controlled General Assembly and a Republican governor?

The arts should not become a political football. The bill establishing the advisory council called for the governor to appoint seven persons "who have intimate knowledge of the cultural and artistic climate and composition of our state and who are qualified to express critical appraisals of performances in the cultural arts."

On the other hand, the bill establishing the arts commission

called for three state representatives, appointed by the House speaker, and two state senators, appointed by the lieutenant governor. Four members to be appointed by the governor are to include a college or university faculty member, a secondary education teacher, a businessman—and one individual "engaged in cultural activities of the state."

Such a body makes a farce of the arts council concept. It opens the door to political control of the arts and their inclusion in the patronage system.

Curiously, Sen. Pat Nero, D-Cranston, introduced the bills for both arts bodies. Why did he propose a sensible system one year, an unfortunate system the next year? The last bill was rushed through at the end of the session and never got explained publicly but Senator Nero should explain its intent now.

At the least, the cultural commission would be taking over the duties of the advisory council. At the worst, it represents an attempt to control the arts for political purposes.