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Reagan Administration: Funding Cuts News Articles (1981-1982): News Article 05

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By Carla Hall

Rep. Sidney Yates (D-Ill.) said yesterday that he "wondered" if the newly announced White House task force on the arts and humanities was an attempt "to remove pressure from the White House engendered by the enormous support for the arts."

Yates made his comments at the House appropriations subcommittee hearing that he chaired on the National Endowment for the Arts. He praised two of the co-chairs of the task force (actor Charlton Heston and University of Chicago president Hanna Gray) as "wonderful people" but noted that President Reagan "might also have included someone from the House and Senate" on the panel that will look at how to generate more private support for the arts and humanities endowments and how possibly to revamp the agencies. "No matter what happens, there will be political overtones," said Yates, who is strongly opposed to the administration's proposal to cut the fiscal 1982 budgets of both endowments by 50 percent.

NEA chairman Livingston Biddle said that he had "volunteered to be of

Perlman, Biddle Testify At NEA Hearing

service to the task force."

The hearing was mainly to gather testimony from NEA officials, but violinist Itzhak Perlman — who sits on the NEA's panel on special constituencies — talked about how the NEA had helped get public auditoriums to comply with the laws specifying that they be barrier-free for handicapped artists (such as Perlman) and audiences. "We're not remembered for our super-duper war planes

but for our artistic accomplishments," Perlman said.

Endowment officials were closely questioned on the subject of their administrative budget — which would increase for fiscal 1982 while the total budget would be cut in half. "I'm very much troubled by the desire to keep the administrative area going full steam while reducing programs," said Rep. Ralph Regula (R-Ohio).

"We would receive a slight diminishing in applications," said Biddle in response, "but not much. We would still receive about 25,000 applications. So the workload would not change."

Regula asked why there were still staff allotted to the Office of Special Constituencies when that department was receiving no funds for fiscal year 1982. "In Special Constituencies there's still a person there who can serve as a resource person for other organizations bringing arts to special constituencies," said Biddle. The office helps make arts programs accessible to older Americans, veterans, the handicapped and institutionalized populations, according to the NEA budget document.