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March 2017

National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities: Reauthorization (1985): Speech 02

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Recommended Citation

Pell, Claiborne, "National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities: Reauthorization (1985): Speech 02" (2017). *National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities: Reauthorization (1985)*. Paper 20.
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STATEMENT BY SENATOR CLAIBORNE (D-RI) ON REAUTHORIZATION OF
THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES, S. 1264

Mr. President, as the chief Senate sponsor of the original National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, I am especially pleased to join with my colleague Senator Stafford in supporting the extension of the vital programs that assist the arts and humanities and provide critically-needed aid to our nation's museums.

With Senator Stafford's supportive leadership as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Education, Arts & Humanities, we have developed what I believe is a sound and realistic bill that will reauthorize the component parts of the Foundation for five years. The current legislation expires as of October 1, 1985 and we propose to extend it through fiscal year 1990.

S. 1264 reflects the Subcommittee's general satisfaction with the operation of the two Endowments and the Institute of Museum Services. The Arts and Humanities Endowments are coincidentally observing their 20th anniversary this year and it is a tremendous personal satisfaction to see the growth that has occurred over these two decades. The skepticism and distrust that met our original proposal has long since faded and these agencies are now the very cornerstone of American cultural activity. Endowment grants are now viewed as marks of distinction and achievement and they have had a profound impact on the development and appreciation of the arts and humanities in the United States.

It has also been personally rewarding to note how bipartisan support for these agencies has increased and strengthened over the years. It marks a reaffirmation that our Federal Government does indeed have an important role to play in the support of culture in this country. This role has always been that of the junior partner

in any project so as to avoid a dominant Government role in dictating our cultural environment. A fundamental concept of the 1965 legislation holds true today - that private initiative should continue to be the principal and primary source for the support and encouragement of the arts and humanities in this country.

One major area which has been of particular concern to me over the past two decades has been the humanities programs in the states. I regret that these organizations were not mandated to be official agencies of the states when the legislation was first enacted in 1965. Arts councils have been official state organizations for this entire period and one cannot help but note how successful they have become in attracting state funds for their respective programs.

I believe that the humanities councils would benefit in the long run if they had similar status as official agencies of the states. However, since the first councils were established in the early 1970's, many of them have established very positive and fruitful relationships with their state governments and I commend them for this. In the 1980 reauthorization I asked that four members of each council be appointed by the Governor in each state to broaden the membership and reinforce the linkage between council and state.

The legislation before us today will increase the Governor's appointees to six. As most councils have between 20 and 25 members, six gubernatorial appointees is a reasonable and appropriate number and should serve to enhance relations with the states even further.

Many of the Administration's own proposals for reauthorization have been incorporated into this bill - changes that are non-controversial, reasonable and timely. In the Arts and Artifacts Indemnification program, for example, the aggregate amount of insurance

available for exhibitions is raised from \$400 million to \$650 million. This is a sensible change which reflects the increased value of works of art as well as the greater demand by museums for indemnification of exhibitions. This program has made it possible for the American public to view an enormous variety of arts and artifacts while saving museums over \$11 million in insurance premiums. The level of indemnity for individual exhibitions is also raised from \$50 million to \$75 million in the first increase per exhibition in the history of the program

The Institute of Museum Services was established in 1976 in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and in 1984 was moved by action of the Congressional authorizing committees to its current place alongside the Endowments as the third independent cultural agency under the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities. The Institute operates a unique grant program which provides urgently-needed general operating support to our nation's museums. It also has recently developed a highly useful program of conservation support which has greatly assisted museums in caring properly for their collections.

This year 449 American museums from every geographical area of the country received GOS awards which totaled \$16,723,000. Funds are provided for basic services such as security, maintenance, education and outreach programs - areas that have traditionally been the most difficult to raise private funds for.

It is absolutely critical that these institutions which preserve our national heritage and make it accessible to the public be healthy and secure both fiscally and physically. The American museum-going public and their future generations deserve no less. The Institute of Museum Services makes an important contribution toward insuring the vitality and permanence of all our museums.

I am pleased to support the extension of these important federal cultural programs and I urge my colleagues to do the same.