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Claiborne Pell

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR CLAIBORNE PELL

Mr. President, eliminating the direct grant program included in this legislation would do great harm to our efforts to support cultural development in our nation. Direct grants support projects of the highest artistic calibre around the country. Providing an opportunity for our artists to create American literature, music, dance and theatre was one of the core aspirations motivating the foundation of an Arts Endowment. Ideally, a National Endowment quietly fosters the creative spirit, allowing the production of significant work, then equally quietly departs the scene when the works become successful.

Judged by these criteria, the Endowment's grants to individual artists have been a great success. Artists who have received fellowships from the National Endowment have gone on to win myriad awards, including 46 Pulitzer Prizes, 48 Macarthur "genius" awards, 28 National Book awards, and many others.

This bill ensures that every grant application is subject to stringent analysis by several levels of review. Eliminating direct grants will not erase every grant that some Americans find offensive, but it will make it impossible for much of our most creative American citizens to make their best contribution to their society. They say that talent does what it can, genius does what it must, but neither will be able to do anything at all if it means the individual will starve. It is well known that private sector support for artists is extremely limited -- companies and patrons generally support institutional projects -- where they can get some prominent attention for their sponsorship. Support of individual artists is central to the mission of the NEA -- essentially to provide a fertile environment for creative talent in our nation.