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## Sub-Grants (1989-1990): Correspondence 08

W. R. Connor

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Princeton University

The Council of the Humanities

122 East Pyne Building, Princeton, New Jersey 08544-5264

The Honorable Sidney R. Yates  
2234 Rayburn Building  
Washington DC 20515  
By Fax: 202 225 3493

COPY

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Several friends and colleagues from around the country have telephoned me in the past few hours to express their concern about the proposed legislation concerning the re-grant programs of the National Endowment for the Humanities. I wanted to convey to you my appreciation of your efforts both in the past and in this current moment to help our country develop strong institutions in the Humanities. I know that the present situation is a very difficult one for you and for many others who share that goal, but I feel confident that you will work with your accustomed dedication to ensure the best possible outcome on the re-grant issue.

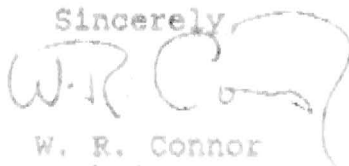
I write with special urgency both as the Chairman of Princeton University's Council of the Humanities and as the Director Designate of the National Humanities Center in North Carolina. All our institutions in the humanities need the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the flexibility to develop independent programs and policies. The overwhelming majority of Centers and Institutes in the humanities that have enjoyed NEH support have acted responsibly and thoughtfully over the years. To penalize them because of episodes resulting from NEA grants seems especially unfortunate. The effects on some of these institutions will be disastrous if a prohibition is placed on NEH re-grants. The Center I will head for example depends on NEH and matching funds for over half of its projected 1990/91 fellowship budget. Our operations might be crippled by such legislation.

The NEH has a crucial role to play in American higher education by supporting high quality programs and individual projects in fields such as literature, philosophy, history, religious studies and moral and ethical values. Diversity in shaping and selecting those projects is crucial, and deeply consistent with our American tradition of decentralization and pluralism. It is also cost efficient, since Centers such as the National Humanities Center apply their endowment income, matching gifts and other non-governmental funds to make NEH grants go as far as possible. I take very seriously the estimate that the elimination of the re-grant program would raise administrative costs at the NEH by approximately one million dollars per year.

The NEH also has a crucial role to play in institution building. Its support of a small number of well-designed centers such as the National Humanities Center helps build independent institutions that in the long-run will have greater and more long lasting effects on the invigoration of teaching and scholarship than grants for the support of individuals. This institution building carries forward our national tradition of diversity and resistance to excessive centralization. The re-grant program is vital for this long range goal.

We rely on your proven leadership on this as on so many other matters. I hope that when the immediate pressures pass we can find time to meet and let me express my personal gratitude for your commitment and vision.

Sincerely



W. R. Connor  
Chairman  
Professor of Classics  
(Director Designate,  
National Humanities Center)

23rd June, 1989