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Claiborne Pell

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Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities

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SENATOR CLAIBORNE PELL: A LIFETIME OF SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS

One of the founding fathers of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, Senator Claiborne Pell has been the staunchest and most consistent advocate in the Congress for American arts and culture throughout the last three decades. Senator Pell's belief in the value of the arts for this nation has resulted in unprecedented opportunities for artists to express their creativity and for the public, particularly in rural and other previously underserved communities, to experience a vast diversity of art forms.

As Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities, Senator Pell led the reauthorization of the Arts Endowment seven times, and successfully raised its authorized funding from $7.2 million to $175 million. His ongoing efforts have been designed to utilize federal funds to maximum effect -- as a catalyst for increasing other sources of funding for the arts. Pell developed the legislation requiring those states receiving federal arts support to establish State Arts Councils, which co-ordinate and encourage state and local arts funding. This legislation has resulted in the provision of over $250 million every year to the arts. Similarly, Pell is the author of legislation developing the Challenge Grant Program, which has generated billions of dollars in new non-federal matching grants. Senator Pell has also encouraged a national focus on the importance of arts education to the continuing vitality of the arts, and designed a program for support of this field within the Arts Endowment. Now as Ranking Minority Member of the Subcommittee, Pell continues to speak on behalf of the preservation of America's cultural heritage and a strong federal role in transmitting the nation's greatest artistic and scholarly achievement to the generations of the future.

Senator Pell's work has enabled programs of extraordinary caliber and variety to flourish in communities across the nation. The Endowments have made a difference in the lives of millions of children and their families. A cultural infrastructure has solidified and grown. In 1965, where there were 46 nonprofit theaters, there are over 425 today. The number of symphony orchestras rose from 58 to over one thousand, opera companies have increased six-fold, and there are ten times as many dance companies now as there were 30 years ago. In 1965, there were five state arts agencies; today every state has a vibrant public arts agency, and there are now community arts agencies in over 3,800 cities, counties and towns. Individuals who have received NEA and NEH support early in their careers have gone on to spectacular achievement, earning numerous important prizes and awards, and creating works that will prove to be an enduring legacy from the second half of the 20th century.

Senator Pell has also been concerned with the needs of American museums, facing state budget cuts coincident with the advent of major opportunities offered by new technologies. Mr. Pell's authored the National Museum Act and held comprehensive Senate hearings on museum needs which led to the establishment of the Institute of Museum Services. Recently, Senators Pell and Jeffords introduced, and the Senate passed,
an amendment to create and authorize the "Institute of Museum and Library Services" (IMLS). The IMLS would constitute and replace two existing federal programs: the Institute of Museum Services and the Library Services and Construction Act.

Acutely aware of the difficulties faced by museums, especially small institutions and those serving disadvantaged communities, in affording insurance for their exhibitions, Senator Pell formulated the Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Act. This legislation provides federal indemnity against loss or damage to art and artifacts while they are on exhibit in the United States or abroad. The program has helped make possible hundreds of exhibitions and thereby allowed tens of millions of museum visitors to enjoy treasures they might not have otherwise experienced. The program has saved museums $70 million since its inception, at a negligible cost to the country.