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National Endowment for the Humanities: Council Reappointments (1984)

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National Endowment for the Humanities: Council Reappointments (1984): Memorandum 02

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United States Senate

MEMORANDUM

Sandy:

I'd welcome your comments and appreciate knowing if your boss will sign the dear colleague and cosponsor.

Kathy

Before the Senate adjourns, we intend to offer an amendment expressing the sense of the Senate that the President should withdraw the recess appointment of Helen Marie Taylor ~~last~~ July to the National Council ~~of~~ the ~~National Endowment for the~~ Humanities.

The controversy surrounding Mrs. Taylor predates this abuse of the recess appointment authority. Her earlier nomination to the Board of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting was blocked by the Senate Commerce Committee.

Mrs. Taylor was then nominated to serve on the National Council of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Labor and Human Resources Committee did not have the opportunity to consider this controversial nomination because the President short-circuited the review process by giving her a recess appointment.

There is no indication in Mrs. Taylor's background ~~which indicates~~ that she is in any way qualified ~~by background or experience~~ for her role on the Humanities Council.

~~Her lack of experience notwithstanding,~~ Her membership on the Advisory Board of the Western Goals Foundation, founded by the late Congressman Larry McDonald who was a National Council Member of the John Birch Society, raises serious questions about her ability to offer independent and unprejudiced judgments at the Endowment. Tactics of Western Goals have come under fire in light of a pending suit against them alleging that they are illegally maintaining a computer list of the personal and political activities of American citizens. According to the complaint, this information will be made available to "officials and employees of Western Goals, and to purportedly 'interested individuals,' law enforcement personnel and organizations throughout the US and elsewhere."

In a LA TIMES article, Western Goals is described as a "clearinghouse for certain police departments that have been barred from keeping political information on citizens not engaged in criminal activity." During an investigation into the LA Police Department's Public Disorder Intelligence Division, one of its officers reported that he had been computerizing his data and providing it to Western Goals. An ACLU spokesperson investigating this data says that the Western Goals files are "really a kind of 'Who's Who' of almost every left of center politician, celebrity, activist, and religious person in this country."

The hearing on the suit against Western Goals is scheduled for November 19. The appearance of activity grossly in violation of American citizens' rights to speech and privacy is alarming. Western Goals certainly would be an inappropriate clearinghouse for information on grants and policy at the Humanities Endowment.

We believe that Helen Marie Taylor is an unsatisfactory choice to serve on the Council that evaluates applications for federal assistance to scholarship in the humanities.

If you have any further questions, or would like to cosponsor this amendment please call ...