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Appropriations (1996): Memorandum 03

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MEMORANDUM

May 10, 1996

To: Senator, Tom, David
From: PDW
Re: NEA News Update

Despite the rather negative article in yesterday's *Washington Post*, the Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior hearing on the National Endowment for the Arts, held on May 8, was fairly positive. Jane Alexander was the sole witness. Senators Gorton, Burns and Bennett took part on the majority side, while Senators Reid and Bumpers "showed the flag" for the Democrats. All praised Jane Alexander's accomplishments (including Burns!), all seemed generally favorable towards the NEA. Senator Bennett was exceptionally eloquent in his arguments to support the NEA at the fullest level.

Senator Gorton said that it might be possible to get a little more money for the NEA in FY'1997, but that level funding was more likely. Jane reiterated the need for \$136 million as requested by the Administration, noting that this amount was still 16% less than the FY'95 appropriation. One other interesting fact: the average basic state grant from the NEA dropped by over \$130,000 this year, hitting the small states like RI the hardest. For RI, this cut plus the 40% cut in Governor Almond's budget spells real trouble for the RI State Arts Council.

The advice that I am getting from arts-sympathetic staffers covering Appropriations is that this year budget details are unlikely to be debated by the members. Rather, the Chairman will make the decision. Thus, if you are so inclined, it might be a good time to urge Senator Hatfield to recommend the full \$136,000 for each of the Endowments, giving the Senate a stronger position when dealing with the House.