Arts and Humanities: Reauthorization (1975): Correspondence 06

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TO: SENATOR
FROM: LB

Nov. 26, '75

The attached from Maury Coats (our Texas proponent of your Pell amendment on state Humanities programs) expresses concern about not having an option for existing State Arts and Humanities Councils to continue.

I wrote back for you the attached just to postpone any decision on this, though I know that you said at the hearings that you didn't want to mislead anyone as to your intent to set up independent groups in each state. At the same time, I didn't think we would want to lose now the support of our major defender -- so left it for further discussions.

One possibility would be to allow present A&H Commissions, or Councils, to exist and then to gradually phase them out and into separate groups -- so that existing structures (now in 11 States) would have time to regroup.

Perfect
As I mentioned during the question and answer period before your Committee, there is a ten-year history of tension and concern between the Endowment for the Arts and the Endowment for the Humanities in many areas of definition of
Responsibilities. Those of us at the state level which have kept the arts and the humanities as a single agency do not have those difficulties and the tensions will be considerably less in both fields within our states. Further, it costs much less to have a single administration over two areas of responsibility than it does to have two separate administrations over each area of responsibility. To set up a separate humanities council in states which already have designated one agency as its arts and humanities councils would require duplicate funding for administration which would be, in my view, wasteful.

There is some feeling on the part of opponents to Section 102 that state agencies which bear the name arts and humanities are a simple accident of history resulting from an attempt to model the federal legislation. In Texas at least, this certainly is not true. This Commission began as the Texas Fine Arts Commission and remained with that title until 1971, at which time it specifically requested the permission of the state legislature to expand its activities to include the humanities. This was a conscious and deliberate action on the part of this Commission because of the genuine and real concern for public access in the humanities. We understand the difference between the arts and humanities; our concerns are in both areas and it is with the concurrence of our state legislature that we have the authority to develop both areas of activity within the State of Texas. To set up a separate agency in the humanities would also require that we compete with each other for funding from the state legislature. As you know, it has been a long, arduous task for state arts councils to develop appropriations which are in any way meaningful to many parts of the country. In Texas we have just achieved a two-hundred and seventy per cent increase in the state appropriation for this agency. For the first time in our history, we have funds from a humanities source (the state legislature) which allows us to begin encouraging and developing humanities programs. This funding is still minimal and because of our more significant funding in the arts for a number of years, it will be some time before our humanities programming is equal to the programming in the arts. But we have taken the first step; the legislature is agreeable to this direction. To have a federally mandated separation of the arts and humanities in Texas requiring the establishment of a separate state humanities agency would not only mean a necessary restructuring of the political base, but would also pit the humanities council against the arts council in the same arena for funding from the state legislature.

I submit respectfully, Senator, that there has been far too much confrontation between the arts and humanities as demonstrated by the National Endowments and that it is time we recognized that these two areas of enterprise are complementary and should join together in cooperative efforts.

This we have done at the state level in Texas and in a few other states as well. It is extremely important that the progress we have made to date not be endangered by this new legislation.

It is equally important that those states choosing to maintain state arts councils which are separate agencies from the state humanities councils be allowed to do so. Many state arts agencies, as you know from our discussion in Austin with the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, do not wish to become active in the field of the humanities. This is an alternative which must remain available to those agencies. I do not propose that every state have an arts and
humanities agency. I do propose for your consideration, Senator, that your legislation secure the right of state determination in this matter so that each state may judge for itself the best structure most appropriate for support of both the arts and humanities.

Again let me express my most sincere gratitude and pleasure at being able to present my views to you directly.

With every good wish,

Maurice Coats
Executive Director

nb
cc: Members, Special Subcommittee on Arts & Humanities; Members, Texas Commission on the Arts and Humanities; Members, Humanities Advisory Panel, TCAH; Members, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies; Mr. Clark Mitze, National Endowment for the Arts.

Enclosure