

2017

National Gallery: Rhode Island Exhibit (1962): Speech 02

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DRAFT STATEMENT FOR CONGRESSIONAL RECORD ON TRAVELING EXHIBIT

Mr. President. Last summer, working closely with Mr. John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, I undertook an art experiment in Rhode Island. It has just reached what I consider to be a most successful conclusion.

Mr. Walker, and Mr. Grose Evans, Curator of the Index of American Design, prepared for me a collection of 16 colotype reproductions of great Renaissance paintings. (See extension of remarks for list) These were shipped to Rhode Island where I arranged to have them exhibited in 19 city and town halls throughout the State for a period of two weeks each. (See extension of remarks for schedule.)

My purpose was not so much to attract art lovers to yet another exhibition, as it was to bring great art to the attention of thousands who might not otherwise be exposed to it. I am happy to say that both of these purposes seem to have been accomplished.

On June 7, 1962 the traveling exhibition had its first opening in the City Hall in Providence. I had fully intended to participate personally in these opening ceremonies, but an important vote in this chamber on that day, kept me in Washington. Therefore, my wife and Mayor Walter Reynolds of Providence did the honors. There was broad press and

television coverage which led to a large degree of popular interest. Since that day, the exhibit has traveled to 18 other cities and towns and I am proud to say has met with enthusiastic approval in virtually every community. I received numerous telephone calls and letters praising the exhibit, both from public officials and from interested citizens. Although it is of course difficult to pinpoint the exact number of people who saw the exhibition, our unofficial estimate is upwards of 15,000.

When this plan was first undertaken, it was thought that if it were successful in Rhode Island it might be inaugurated throughout the country. I should respectfully like to suggest that this be done. The minor difficulties necessarily attendant on a new program of this type have been called to the attention of the National Gallery. I am assured that they can easily be straightened out. The main problem that I would foresee in a national program would be one of logistics. I had the paintings driven throughout the State in a station wagon. I can understand that the distinguished Senators from California or Illinois might have difficulty with this mode of transportation. But I am certain that some other financially reasonable method of transportation can be arranged in these larger states.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr.

Walker and Mr. Evans whose wholehearted cooperation was vital to the success of "Operation Traveling Art." I think that together we have rendered benefit to many citizens in Rhode Island. Now that we have succeeded in "getting their feet wet" it is my hope that we have awakened a desire to "jump into the pool" of art appreciation.