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Legislative History of the Reauthorization of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) (1990): Memorandum 01

John Hammer

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The NHA National Humanities Alliance

11 July 1994

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the United States Senate
FR: John Hammer
RE: FY-95 Appropriations for the Endowments [H.R. 4602]

In the next few days, the Senate will take up the recommendations of the Committee on Appropriations for the Interior and Related Agencies appropriation for FY-1995. I write on behalf of the members of the National Humanities Alliance¹ to urge support at least at the level proposed by the President for the National Endowment for the Humanities and its sister agencies the National Endowment for the Arts and the Institute of Museum Services.

Although NHA's members are supportive of all three agencies, it is the National Endowment for the Humanities that is of most immediate concern. NEH is the engine that both nurtures and supports scholarship in every field of the humanities; sponsors imaginative and highly successful projects to strengthen teaching and other areas of education in the humanities; and supports directly and through state humanities councils public humanities programming that reaches every state and most communities across the U.S.A.

Examples of NEH-supported activities include:

- o Professional development activities for teachers to increase knowledge in their fields. Summer institutes train close to 1,000 teachers each summer from across the country with a direct benefit to 85,000 students over the next three years.

- o Working with the Department of Education seeks to bring the highest level of humanities scholarship to bear in the development of the national educational standards for history, geography, foreign languages and the arts as part of Goals 2000.

- o Using radio and direct public programs across the country, scholar-lead reading and discussion programs offer presentations on books, authors, and trends in humanities disciplines.

- o Major media productions such as The Civil War, The Great Depression, documentaries on presidents Eisenhower and L.B. Johnson bring to every home great events and figures that have shaped our

¹The National Humanities Alliance is a coalition of more than seventy-five organizations (see attached list) concerned with federal policies affecting scholarship and other work in the humanities. Approximately 800,000 individuals comprise the memberships of the organizations that participate in the NHA.

nation's history. These presentations augment classroom learning and well as engaging adult audiences. Two upcoming programs are the history of American Baseball, and history of the American West.

o Permanent and temporary Museum exhibitions throughout the country include: Frank Lloyd Wright; The World of Thomas Jefferson at Monticello; Our Place in the West -- a long-term exhibition in Montana exploring the foundation for the West's contemporary culture by examining turn of the century settlements; Bridges and Boundaries: exhibition on the relationship between African-American and American Jews -- a traveling exhibition looking at the relationships between the two groups in the 20th century; and the Denver Art Museum's use of its Asian art collection for teaching children which includes "discovery desks" that are designed to engage the children in thinking about art.

o Scholarly research activities including: Restoration of Verdi's Stifello that permitted the first hearing at the Metropolitan Opera as the composer intended; discovery of more than 70,000 documents on President Lincoln that demolish the myth that he was a rustic lawyer with only a rudimentary practice; the translation into English of important humanities texts such as the pre-1949 writings of Mao Zedong.

o Scholarly dissemination through the publication of more than 1,900 books produced by NEH fellowship grantees. Many of these have received national awards.

o Over 600,000 brittle books have been cataloged and preserved on film thus making available scholarly works, photographs, and other artifacts that would be lost forever without this preservation and related access support. Ken Burns's Civil War series utilizes photographs preserved with NEH support. Likewise, the NEH's newspaper preservation project is preserving the history of local communities and states as chronicled in over 200,000 local newspapers.

The NEH very much needs its full appropriation. As the attached graph illustrates, the agency has been almost continuously contributing to deficit reduction for the last 15 years.

If you or your staff would like further information about the NEH or are in need of other assistance in preparing for the floor discussion of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriation, please contact me at 202/296-4994. In any event, please support the endowment's budget requests as sent forward by the President.

Sincerely,



John Hammer
Director

National Endowment for the Humanities Decline in Buying Power Since FY 1979

