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Museum Services Act (1984): News Article 06

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Museum unit fights for its life

The Institute of Museum Services, youngest of the art agencies, will shortly have a new home in the new Department of Education. But a clause in the new department's legislation last week, authorizing the new education secretary to abolish about 44 small agencies including the IMS, poses a risk to the unit's future.

The IMS, however, has led a charmed life since it was shepherded into legislative existence by Rep. John Brademas, D-Ind. and Sen. Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., two years ago. And they have already taken steps, according to IMS director Lee Kimche, to save the agency from potential oblivion.

"We were very concerned," said Kimche on Saturday as she prepared to leave for a 10-nation NATO-sponsored conference in Greece to study the impact of pollution on cultural property. She said that before the conference committee vote on the matter, she'd "talked about it" with Pell, and Brademas "because they're the fathers of our legislation." And that they'd conveyed their concern to the administration.

Now she's been assured by both,

she said, of "a gentleman's agreement" arrived at with James T. McIntyre Jr., director of the Office of Management and Budget and head of the transition team to implement the legislation, "that we will be placed directly under the (new education) secretary."

It would place the museum agency in the same position it enjoyed at the old Department of Health, Education and Welfare, where they were placed in the department of education, though reporting directly to the secretary.

Kimche said the assurances she's received from her congressional friends would be backed up in a letter from McIntyre.

She said she anticipates no problems. Even during the agency's brief relationship with the new HEW secretary Patricia Harris, she said "we had her support. Everybody loves museums."

The agency has asked for \$10.9 million in 1980 funds to meet its mandate to keep the nation's museums open with basic operating funds. Kimche felt confident IMS will continue to enjoy autonomous status.

—Ruth Dean.