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## Senate Speeches on the Arts and Humanities (1994-1996): Speech 05

Claiborne Pell

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## STATEMENT OF SENATOR CLAIBORNE PELL

Mr. President. At this time when the FY'97 appropriations level for the National Endowment for the Arts is being determined, I would like to illustrate the importance of the arts to the education of our children and to the growth of the local economy through two examples from my home state of Rhode Island.

The May 23 issue of *Nature* describes The Starting With the Arts (SWAP) program for 96 first-graders in four Pawtucket, Rhode Island classrooms. The program is based on the internationally-recognized Kodaly curriculum that emphasizes musical and visual arts skills. After seven months, the SWAP children scored better in math than their counterparts who had standard classes -- and equally well in reading -- even though their kindergarten scores indicated that they were behind. At the end of second grade, math comprehension and problem-solving skills were highest in students who received two years of the special program, next best in those who had one year, and worst in those who received the standard curriculum.

The findings of a nationwide survey on the attitudes of Americans towards the arts, conducted by Louis Harris and released this month, found that 9 in 10 Americans believed that when children get involved in the arts in school, they "become more creative and imaginative," "develop skills that make them feel more accomplished," and "learn to communicate well." Over 8 in 10 Americans also feel that exposure to the arts "helps young people develop discipline and perseverance" and helps them "to learn skills that can be useful in a job." The Pawtucket youngsters confirm these beliefs.

My second example stems from a two-hour public forum organized as part of the 16th International Sculpture Conference in Providence last week. At this meeting, numerous civic,

cultural and business leaders came forward to show how the arts have served to stimulate the economic revival of downtown Providence. What is happening in Rhode Island is happening nationally. Non-profit arts organizations create nearly \$37 billion in economic activity in the United States every year, and support 1.3 million American jobs.

The arts are one of the best and the cheapest ways of improving the economy. The arts stimulate business development, spur urban renewal, attract new businesses, and improve the overall quality of life in our cities and towns. Roger Mandle at the Rhode Island School of Design has repeatedly demonstrated the importance of design to both the economy and greater ease in every day life. Existing and available cultural resources are frequently cited as one of the prime reasons businesses select to move to a community. The arts can literally turn a community or neighborhood around.

One of the best illustrations of the impact of the arts on the economy is tourism, and tourism is the fastest growing economic market in the United States today. In Providence, the Providence Performing Arts Center and Trinity Square Repertory Company have brought countless audiences to their theaters, with many people spending money on restaurants, shops, parking, and the like that would not do so otherwise without the presence of the arts. Recent discussions among the museums in the downtown area have led to the exciting concept of a Museum Mile connecting these cultural institutions through a collective effort in marketing, fund raising, parking, transportation. The result will attract visitors from all over the country to Providence. When the arts business is good, more people are employed, and more taxable income generates more revenue for our State and local municipalities.

There are more artists per square mile living in Providence than in any other city in the United States, and this number is likely to increase with the passage of proposed state

legislation that would provide state income and sales breaks to artists living or working in the central business district. One bill would exempt these artists from paying sales tax on plays, books, musical compositions, paintings and sculpture. A second bill would provide these artists with a personal tax exemption. The Rhode Island House Finance Committee has voted its approval. In praising the effort, Mayor Vincent A. Cianci Jr. states: "These bills, while supporting our artists and arts, promote economic development and tourism and will create a more dynamic synergy among the Arts and Entertainment District, Capital Center and the Providence Place mall."

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to consider these examples from Rhode Island, to understand the far-reaching positive impact of the arts on both education and economy, and to join together in a bipartisan effort to appropriate \$136 million for the National Endowment for the Arts as requested by the Administration. It is important that this Agency is funded sufficiently to be able to continue its worthwhile and extremely effective endeavors to improve the quality of life for all Americans.

The recent Harris poll referenced above shows that federal support for the arts remains solid and strong. Surprisingly, Harris also found that a 61% majority of Americans (to 37% saying "no") would be willing to be taxed \$5 more in order to pay for federal financial support for the arts. Fully 86% of all American adults are exposed to the arts in the course of a year. These people believe the arts to be important and would sorely miss them if they were not there.