Curran, Edward: Confirmation Hearing (1985): Speech 05

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the fellowship program?

Mr. Curran. I do not have particular views other
than I think it is an excellent program. You know,
I was a person who had the benefit, when I was an undergraduate,
of having not graduate students teach me, but having
Maynard Mack himself teach Shakespeare, and Bernard
Knox himself teach Greek drama, and Donaldson teach
Chaucer, and Davis Harding teach Milton, and Skelton
and Spencer.

But the fellowships enable those colleges and universities
to give the opportunity for their faculty members to
advance scholarship, to make progress in scholarship.
And I think it is an excellent program.

Senator Pell. What is your own view with regard
to the division known as the General Programs--I think
It was formerly known as the Public Programs, which
is the name I prefer--but do you have any view to that?

Mr. Curran. It was, I think, called Public Programs,
and has just recently been changed to General Programs.
I am familiar with some of the works they have done---
the series, Heritage, Civilization and the Jews; Castle;
the Young Children's Program on Booker T. Washington.
I think this is another way to be able to translate
the culture, the traditions of civilization, the heritage
of mankind to the general public. I think we should
do work in that area, and do good work in that area.

Senator Pell. And what influence do you think that the Chairman of the Endowment in Washington should have over the decisions made by the State Humanities Councils?

Mr. Curran. Before I came to this hearing, someone urged me to be very careful—I think that the Endowment should work closely with the State programs in terms of giving them as much support as they possibly can.

Senator Pell. Well, if they fund a program that you feel objectionable, coming from the left or coming from the right, or for some other reason—.

Mr. Curran. You know, when I was at Cathedral School when I first came here, at one time, I was given a report that I was considered the radical leftist on the campus, and the next week, the ultra-conservative. And I will have to live with my use of those terms, and I do.

But as I understand it, the decisions at the State level are made by the State Councils. I did see one State proposal, and I would not be an expert on it, but it had to do with the influence of the sauna bath on Finnish immigrants to this country, and it was funded.

Now, I have not quite worked out how that is central to the humanities, but I think the States try to exercise
good judgment and are pretty much autonomous in that sense.

It does not mean I would not talk to them and try to see what they were doing. I had a good discussion with Mrs. Burlington who, as you know, is in charge of the division of State programs.

Senator Pell. One of the weaknesses of the State Councils, in my view, is that they are really a coopting body, where they select from their own ranks, rather than having them appointed through the political process.

I know we discussed this in our meeting, and it has been a certain bone of contention with the Humanities Committees. They were State Endowment since it started, in a way, because I have said before, the original support for the Endowments in the Arts and the Humanities came from the humanities community; and the arts had no constituency, in the arts came in--piggyback on the humanities. As a result of that, we were not able to write the enabling language for the humanities as we would have liked, Senator Javits, myself, and some others.

For that reason, we were not able to incorporate the same State Council relationship as it came through the process of State government, State government. The result, I think, has been that in the last few years, you can travel around the country in Nebraska
or Vermont or wherever you like, and you can ask the average high school teacher or reasonably educated person, "Who is the head of the Arts Council?" and they will know. You can say, "Who is the head of the Humanities Council or Committee?" and they do not know.

So one of the jobs of the Chairman, as I see it, is to give a greater visibility to the humanities councils and also to give—I would hope we could move further down the path to the governors' appointees, going from—they start out with two, I think—to four—now it is six. And I would hope it would move up, before we are through, to 100 percent. I realize this will be a point of argument for a good many more years, but I just wanted to put on the record of this hearing my own view in that regard.

I would be interested in your thoughts as to what the formal relationship should be between the State Humanities Councils and the State governments.

Mr. Curran. I do know, Senator, that each year the Endowment writes to each Governor to see if they would entertain this concept, and to date, no State government has taken us on.

Senator Pell. That is right. It requires a financial commitment which they are reluctant to make.

Mr. Curran. And I was about to say, I think it