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National Endowment for the Humanities: Council Reappointments (1984): Correspondence 08

Robert L. Harris Jr.

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JUN 4 1984

2 Soldiers Field Park
Boston, Ma. 02163
May 29, 1984

Senator Claiborne Pell
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Pell;

As a citizen interested in the Humanities and the benefit of programs for the general public, I am concerned about the caliber of nominees proposed for membership on the National Council for the Humanities. I understand that these nominees require approval of the Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities before being sent to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources and then to the full Senate for confirmation.

I strongly urge you as a member of the Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities to hold hearings on the candidates to determine their interest and concern for the Humanities. Unlike previous council appointees, of both Democrat and Republican administrations, the proposed new council members do not share the same depth of involvement nor breadth of expertise in the Humanities. If, as appears to be the case, these nominees take their appointments as primarily honorific, it could have a devastating effect on the National Council. It should function with the advice of informed citizens from a range of backgrounds who can help promote the Humanities in their fullest sense. There appears to be a tilt in recent and prospective appointees to political science, political philosophy, and political activism. This narrowing of perspective can only restrict rather than widen Humanities focus and discussion.

These issues raise important enough questions for the Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities to take time to interview the nominees, to assess their concerns about the Humanities, and then to determine if these are the best possible appointees to advance the work of the National Endowment for the Humanities as a public agency supported by tax dollars.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Harris Jr.

Robert L. Harris Jr.