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## Reauthorization: S. 2724 (1990): News Article 03

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# Arts Endowment Backers Are Split on Strategy

By WILLIAM H. HONAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 16 — Congressional supporters of the National Endowment for the Arts are divided over whether to seek a one-year or a five-year reauthorization for the agency.

The chairmen of both the House and Senate subcommittees who ended hearings on reauthorization in April said they favor extending the life of the agency for the longer period, but attacks on the arts endowment have become so intense in recent weeks that some supporters now believe a one-year reauthorization, or even none at all, would be prudent because it is considered likely to arouse less debate.

"The first thing we have to do is remove this as an election-year issue," said Representative Bob Carr, the Michigan Democrat who heads the House Arts Caucus. "We could do that with a one-year reauthorization. Otherwise, I fear we're not going to get happy results, and will draw the N.E.A. into needless controversy."

Representative Pat Williams, the Montana Democrat who is chairman of the House subcommittee that has held hearings on reauthorization, also acknowledged that a one-year reauthorization might now be necessary, although Senator Claiborne Pell, the Rhode Island Democrat who heads the Senate subcommittee that oversees the endowment, supports the five-year extension.

## Mail Is Heavy

"I believe and hope that the Senate is holding to our original reauthorization agenda to seek a five-year extension of current law very much along the lines proposed by President Bush," Senator Pell said in response to a telephone inquiry.

Mail to members of Congress has been running heavily against the endowment, complaining that the agency has supported obscene or sacrilegious art. Letter-writing campaigns against the agency have been organized by conservative groups such as the American Family Association of Tupelo, Miss., and the California-based Traditional Values Coalition, among others.

Representative Steve Gunderson, a Wisconsin Republican, said: "I have

received more mail on this than any other issue. For a guy who comes from a rural district in the Midwest, and in a year when we have a new farm bill, it's remarkable to get 5 to 10 times as much mail on this as any other issue."

## Effect on Elections

Mr. Gunderson acknowledged that most of the mail he has received appeared to be organized, but he said that he could not ignore it and that he believes most of his colleagues have been similarly inundated.

A spokesman for Representative Philip R. Sharp, an Indiana Democrat, said a Republican opponent in his home district was broadcasting a radio commercial in which Mr. Sharp, who supports the arts endowment, was criticized for having "spent our tax dollars to pay for an art exhibit which celebrates child pornography and showed homosexual acts too obscene to describe."

In response to such pressure, two House Republicans held a news conference today to announce a proposal to change the arts endowment. Representative Thomas E. Coleman, Republican of Missouri, and Mr. Gunderson, said their proposal would give 60 percent of the endowment's money to state arts councils for distribution,

## The life of the arts agency may be extended for one year instead of 5.

leaving the endowment with only 40 percent. State councils now receive only 20 percent.

## Other Republican Support

Mr. Gunderson, the deputy Republican whip, said the proposal had the support of Representative Robert H. Michel of Illinois, the minority leader, and Representative Newt Gingrich of Georgia, the minority whip.

Representative Carr, who says he is "a wholehearted supporter of the arts endowment," said he had suggested to House leaders that Congress could appropriate a budget for

the agency without reauthorizing it.

"The Legal Services Corporation, much of the Department of Energy and the highway program have been appropriated but not authorized in the past," he said. "It requires a decision by the Rules Committee, but it can be done that way."

John E. Frohnmayer, the chairman of the endowment, strongly favors a five-year extension on the agency's life.

"I know he doesn't want to be chairman of a stop-gap agency," Mr. Carr said, "but on the other hand we have members who would lay down on barbed wire for some issues — the environment, for example — but not for this."

Congress last reauthorized the arts endowment in 1985 for five years. That authorization expires on Sept. 30.

## Why Grants Were Deferred

Meanwhile, Jacob Neusner, a member of the National Council on the Arts, supplied details about 18 grants on which the council deferred consideration at its closed quarterly meeting over the weekend in Winston-Salem, N.C.

The grants, Mr. Neusner said, were for solo theatrical performers. "We were given a list of names," he said, "followed by the amount of the grant, but no other information, and asked to vote on that."

"When I asked for more information," he continued, "we were told that one of the grants was for a performer who urinates on the audience, and another was for a woman who — these are the exact words we were given — takes off her clothes and inserts vegetables into various bodily orifices."

"That was when I made the motion that we not consider this proposal until August, at which time we would have more information on all 18 performers so we could come to a responsible decision on what to recommend to the chairman."

## Bush to Appoint 8

In another development, President Bush today announced his intention to appoint eight members of a commission that was mandated last fall to review the grant-making procedures of the arts endowment. They are:

John Brademas, president of New York University

David E. Connor, former chairman of the Illinois Arts Council.

Marcia Laing Golden, past president of the board of the Association of Community Arts Agencies of Kansas.

Kay Huffman Goodwin, member of the National Advisory Council on the Arts and Education.

Joan W. Harris, Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs in Chicago.

Kitty Carlisle Hart, chairman of the New York State Council on the Arts.

Reter N. Kyros Jr., a former White House aide in the arts and humanities.

Rosalind W. Wyman, a former member of the National Council on the Arts.

## Criticism of the Proposal

The proposal to give 60 percent of the endowment's money to state

## Bush selects 8 members of a panel to evaluate grant decisions.

agencies was criticized today by six directors of art institutions that have presented or will present the Robert Mapplethorpe retrospective that started all the fuss last June. They had a news conference at the Washington Project for the Arts, the organization that presented the Mapplethorpe show after the Corcoran Gallery of Art canceled it.

They had come to Washington to lobby Congress and show their solidarity with Dennis Barrie, director of the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati. He has been indicted on obscenity charges in connection with seven of the Mapplethorpe photographs. In concert, they labeled the House Republicans' proposal a "thinly disguised attempt to destroy the validity and centrality of the National Endowment for the Arts."

A proposed Republican restriction on endowment grants of less than \$50,000, they pointed out, would discriminate against smaller art institutions with smaller budgets. "The endowment's seal of approval is very important for small arts institutions that are just starting out," said Jock Reynolds, a former director of the Washington Project for the Arts.