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Reauthorization: Hearings and Reports (1990): Correspondence 14

Charles Blitzer

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CHARLES BLITZER, DIRECTOR



June 22, 1989

The Honorable Sidney R. Yates
 Chairman, House Interior
 Appropriation Committee
 B-308 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I should begin by making clear that this is a personal rather than an official communication. The Woodrow Wilson Center does not take positions on legislation affecting other agencies, and as you know is not eligible to receive grants from the National Humanities Endowment.

It is on the basis largely of my experience as Director of the National Humanities Center, that I am writing to urge that the re-grant programs of the National Endowment for the Humanities not be unduly restricted by the Congress. I shall make this letter brief, but if you should wish a longer statement or a discussion of the issues, I am as always at your disposal.

The National Humanities Center has regularly received grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities under the Endowment's program of Fellowships for Centers of Advanced Study. The funds received by the Humanities Center are used each year to support a number of fellows in residence chosen through the Center's regular selection process.

On the basis of my experience, I can state two things with great certainty. The first is that these NEH funds are enormously important to the National Humanities Center, as I suspect they are to the other centers which receive them. Secondly, this program is administered by the NEH with great skill and care. The NEH monitors both the selection process and the work of the fellows supported by its funds with diligence, and each application for a renewal of the grant leads to a site visit by a carefully chosen team that inquires into every aspect of the Center's work and meets with every NEH-supported fellow.

Finally, I would emphasize that this NEH re-grant program brings an extremely important element of pluralism to the Endowment's support of the humanities. Rather than have every NEH-supported fellow chosen directly by the Endowment itself, the program greatly increases the number of institutions and scholars involved in the selection, while at the same time exercising due diligence to insure that each selection process meets the highest standard appropriate to the expenditure of Federal funds. In short, I would say that this program comes close to being a model of decentralization combined with continuing federal oversight and quality control.

I could speak of other NEH re-grant programs of which I am also aware, and which also seem to me to work admirably, but for the sake of brevity, I shall confine my comments to the one with which I am most familiar.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles Blitzer', written in a cursive style.

Charles Blitzer

bcc: Kent Mulligan
National Humanities Center