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Nomination Hearing (1993)

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6-25-1993

## Hackney, Sheldon: Humanities Chairman Nomination Hearing (1993): Speech 01

Claiborne Pell

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**STATEMENT BY SENATOR CLAIBORNE PELL AT THE CONFIRMATION  
HEARING OF DR. SHELDON HACKNEY TO BE CHAIRMAN OF THE NEH  
JUNE 25, 1993**

I am very pleased to join with my colleagues in welcoming Dr. Hackney to this hearing today. I believe President Clinton has made a superb decision in nominating you, Dr. Hackney, to chair one of the very finest agencies of our federal government, the National Endowment for the Humanities.

As you know I have had a longtime interest in the efforts of our government to support and encourage the humanities. As the Senate author of the legislation, which 28 years ago, established the twin Endowments that support both the arts and humanities, I welcome this opportunity to question you and to learn more of your views in this public forum.

I regard the Chairmanship of the Humanities Endowment as the most important and most powerful position in the humanities in the United States. For this reason, the Chairman must have the ability to lead and inspire. He must be accessible and responsive to all segments of the humanities community - from scholar to public citizen. He must ensure that NEH grants are based on excellence - not ideology. And he must constantly monitor the integrity of the grant review process so that balance and fairness are always paramount considerations.

Dr. Hackney is a man of tremendous stature and intelligence who, I believe, will be a strong and effective Chairman. He has an extraordinary record of scholarly, professional and administrative achievement that includes 18 years at the helm of two major universities - Tulane and the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to this he was Provost and Professor at my own alma mater, Princeton University. It also should be noted that throughout these years, he continued to teach and to share his knowledge as a historian of the American South with undergraduate students. The fact that he never left the classroom will likely contribute to his effectiveness as NEH Chairman.

I regret that the recent flurry of press about 2 incidents on the Penn campus has obscured what is so clearly an enormously successful 12 year Presidency there. (I should add congratulations here for Penn's recent success as one of Walter Annenberg's major beneficiaries.) These incidents have been blown far out of proportion and have generated needless controversy about this nomination. The fact that Dr. Hackney has had to wrestle with the difficult and sensitive issues that are so prevalent on college campuses today, should be considered a significant asset rather than a negative.

Our task today is to establish the fact that Dr. Hackney is fit and qualified to serve in this important leadership capacity and to make a recommendation on confirmation to the full Senate. His record is a truly outstanding one. We should all be thankful that such a highly-qualified individual has been nominated to head this agency under our jurisdiction.

I look forward to supporting you and to working with you in the years ahead to make the NEH as effective as it can be.