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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20506

THE CHAIRMAN

June 4, 1976

Honorable Albert H. Quie
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Al:

Although both the House and Senate versions of our reauthorization bill contain details upon which we have not testified and upon which there is no formal Administration position, it occurs to me that it may be helpful for you to have an informal statement of our attitude towards the two bills as you get ready for conference. The enclosed papers present our comments upon each of the major differences between the two bills. This letter will summarize those in order to give you a sense of our priorities.

In general, I should indicate as strongly as I can that we believe the House bill to be preferable in every respect. I personally should like it if your bill could be adopted in its entirety! However, insofar as some accommodation may have to be made between the House and the Senate, you may wish to note the relative seriousness of our concerns in these six areas where the bills differ.

1. The parts of the Senate bill which relate to state humanities committees and state humanities agencies are wholly unacceptable to us. Despite a late amendment in Committee which appears to offer the possibility of state committees continuing, the Senate legislation clearly intends that they be replaced by state agencies within three years. All witnesses from the humanistic community have indicated that the Senate provisions are inappropriate and inoperable; a number of governors have expressed similar sentiments. The House bill on the other hand, provides strict guidelines for the conduct of state programs; and, these granted, it makes possible the continuation of volunteer state committees or the establishing of state humanities agencies where that may prove advisable. The House legislation is clean, clear and positive: it already accommodates what were the Senate's legitimate concerns. In itself it was already a concession to the Senate's interest.

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2. The House bill provides a "challenge grant program" for both the Arts Endowment and the Humanities Endowment, while the Senate provides such a program only for the Arts. It was the Humanities Endowment which, with the New York Public Library, invented the challenge grant mechanism (subsequently adopted by the Arts Endowment with the New York Metropolitan Opera); the number of needy humanities institutions--research libraries, historical associations, museums, etc.--which would be able to participate in such a program far exceeds the number of eligible arts institutions; the humanities institutions have greater need than the arts institutions, insofar as they have no box office receipts, and they comprise permanent physical resources which must be preserved and maintained. Under these circumstances we fear that the Senate proposal of a challenge program only for the Arts may be morally and politically indefensible. (See also paragraph #4, below). The House's challenge program for both Endowments must be sustained.

3. The Senate bill breaches the principle of parity in outright and matching authority which has always been maintained and strongly defended--by all members of the House subcommittee, for example--since the establishing of the two Endowments. The constituency for the Humanities is in fact far larger than that for the Arts, although less visible; and the participants in humanities programs outnumber those presently participating in the arts. We therefore support the House bill which preserves the principle of parity in outright and matching funds between the two Endowments, and oppose the Senate legislation which, for the first time and without clear reason, breaches the principle of parity.

4. While the Senate legislation does not propose a challenge grant program for the Humanities Endowment, it does establish a special "challenge" or "matching" authority specifically directed to a continued, Bicentennial-related program over the next decade. The House legislation makes no provision for such a program. We find the intentions of this Senate program interesting and appropriate to the Endowment; however, our experience indicates that such a program can not be conducted on a matching or challenge basis. We believe that such a program could only be run by the Endowment if a special authorization of outright funds were made--comparable to those special authorizations provided in the Senate bill for the Bicentennial photo program and an arts teacher-education program through the National Endowment for the Arts (see below, paragraph #5).

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5. The Senate bill includes authorization of two special programs in the Arts Endowment: one for a Bicentennial-related photo program, the other for an art teacher-education program. We are not entirely persuaded that it is a good idea to include within the Foundation's authorizing legislation any special provisions: there is, after all, no reason why such activities cannot be conducted within the general authorization. However, should the conference determine that such activities are appropriate, we strongly urge that the extended Bicentennial program, provided by the Senate for the Humanities Endowment, be put in this category rather than in a separate "matching" or "challenge" category. Here the extended Bicentennial program would be viable; and thus the principle of parity would be preserved even within special authorizations.

6. The Endowment has taken no position on the museum services provisions. We merely note that the Endowment will continue its own grant programs for museums, which do not duplicate any proposed for the new Institute. Insofar as the latter will provide primarily operating expenses, presumably on a formula basis, it may well have more in common with programs characteristically administered in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare rather than within the Foundation.

I believe the accompanying papers, which explain our position somewhat more fully, may be useful to you and your staff as you prepare for conference. Please do not hesitate to call me if I may provide you with any further information. I am writing to Congressman Brademas in similar vein.

Sincerely,



Ronald S. Berman
Chairman

Enclosures