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Reauthorization: Hearings and Reports (1990): Memorandum 01

John H. Hammer

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MEMORANDUM

TO: NHA Members
FR: John Hammer


A key session at the Alliance's meeting of 9 December 1988 is a discussion of issues which may comprise the NHA's agenda for the reauthorization of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The purpose of this memorandum is to outline issues which may arise in the course of the reauthorization process. Over the next two to three months, the Board of Directors will be determining an NHA strategy for the reauthorization including positions on key issues. Since by the end of February 1989 the NHA needs to be prepared to discuss its interests with policy makers, the opportunity to begin focussing on potential issues during the gathering on December 9 takes on added importance. The following is certainly not an exhaustive list of potential issues which could arise in connection with the reauthorization, but does include concerns raised within the Alliance over the last two years combined with relevant points gleaned from an on-going study of previous reauthorizations.

Background - The National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965 (NFAHA) is currently authorized through the end of the 1990 fiscal year. The target date for completing legislation for reauthorizing the Act, which encompasses the National Endowment for the Humanities and its sister agencies, is 30 September 1990. Subcommittees of the House and Senate committees with authorizing responsibilities (Education and Labor, and Labor and Human Resources respectively) are beginning preliminary planning for hearings. Soon after the 101st Congress convenes in January, staff of the Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education (Chaired by Rep. Pat Williams [D-MT]) and the Education, Arts and Humanities Subcommittee (Chaired by Senator Claiborne Pell [D-RI]) will meet to coordinate schedules.

General Considerations and Caveats:

- Most issues connected with NEH can be framed in terms of elitists versus populists (and NHA members are not generally viewed as populist organizations);

- Issues affecting the National Endowment for the Arts are likely to affect NEH;

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In most instances, the considered NHA position may be that the interests of NHA members are best served by continuing present policies unchanged;

Proposals for new programs or other increased expenditures invite Congressional challenges to identify areas to reduce by equivalent amounts unless the appropriations pie can be seen as expandable;

A correlate of the previous point is that even in very tight, high deficit situations, some new concerns are identified and funded;

It is very possible that early in the new Administration, serious and broad cuts in the non-defense/non-entitlement budgets will be part of a package to reduce the deficit... the reauthorization process for NEH may unfold within such a general atmosphere; and finally

Lynne Cheney's American Memory: A Report on the Humanities in the Nation's Public Schools (1987), and Humanities In America: A Report to the President, the Congress, and the American People (1988) were produced by the NEH Chairman in response to directives included in the 1985 reauthorization of NEH. Each report offers a number of specific recommendations. It is most likely that all or most of Mrs. Cheney's recommendations will be raised as issues during the reauthorization process. (The recommendations from both reports are included below as Attachment 1)

A. ISSUES FOR WHICH THERE IS PERCEIVED TO BE AN NHA CONSENSUS FOR POSITIVE INTERVENTION

1. Information on the Humanities and Public Policy

The analysis of data is a defining characteristic of the public policy process. For most of this decade, debate on the meaning -- and more recently accuracy -- of statistics on higher education enrollments in the humanities has played an important role in the formulation of federal humanities policies. NEH is in a key position to directly undertake or sponsor the collection, analysis, and dissemination of comprehensive data on key activities in the humanities. Many observers believe that NEH has not responded effectively to these needs and as a result, there is inadequate information on which to base policy decisions.

The legislative provision that prompted the recently released Humanities In America outlines in rather clear language the kinds of information that the policy makers felt would be necessary for future decision making on the Endowments programs. (Unless otherwise noted, the passages from the current law included with the discussion of issues below, are reproduced from the "Compilation of..."
Section 7

(k) The Chairperson of the National Endowment for the Humanities shall, in consultation with State and local agencies, other relevant organizations, and relevant Federal agencies, develop a practical system of national information and data collection on the humanities, scholars, educational and cultural groups, and their audiences. Such system shall include cultural and financial trends in the various humanities fields, trends in audience participation, and trends in humanities education on national, regional, and State levels. Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of the Arts, Humanities, and Museums Amendments of 1985, the Chairperson shall submit to the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Labor and Human Resources of the Senate a plan for the development and implementation of such system, including a recommendation regarding the need for any additional funds to be appropriated to develop and implement such system. Such system shall be used, along with a summary of the data submitted with plans under subsection (f), to prepare a report on the state of the humanities in the Nation. The state of the humanities report shall include a description of the availability of the Endowment's programs to emerging and culturally diverse scholars, cultural and educational organizations, and communities and of the participation of such scholars, organizations, and communities in such programs. The state of the humanities report shall be submitted to the President and the Congress, and provided the States, not later than October 1, 1988, and biennially thereafter.

The questions that NHA may wish to raise about data and information can be framed in terms of Humanities In America, the first of the state of the humanities reports called for in the legislation:

- Has the "practical system of national information and data collection on the humanities" called for in 1985 been developed?

- Should Biennial State of the Humanities Reports continue after 1990? and

- If continued Biennial Reports are assumed, what precise sorts of data should NEH be collecting? How can these reports best reflect the diversity of the humanities?

In the view of the NHA committee charged with reviewing Humanities In America, the report underscores the lack of adequate data. The MLA has taken the lead in analyzing the information on college humanities enrollments used in the report. The critique offered by MLA (which greatly amplifies the concerns of NHA's committee), strongly indicates that the information is inadequate to support the findings offered by the report. (See Attachment 2 on pages 16-19).
It should also be noted that NEH's formal response in December 1986 to the Congressional mandate to develop a "practical system of national information and data collection" was "The information we plan on using to conduct our assessment of the state of the humanities is largely in place, and so we have proposed no new data collection projects as part of this system...no additional funds will be sought for the implementation of the system."

2. Flexibility of Programs

In 1985, one of the five overall conclusions reached by the House with regard to the existing legislation was that "The flexibility of the Endowment's programs needs to be maintained." The report language in the Arts, Humanities, and Museum Amendments of 1985 (H Rept. 99-274) reads:

Flexibility

The United States is undergoing remarkable change in its demographic characteristics and its social fabric. In the world of arts, humanities, and museums these changes have been startling, in part accelerated by the successes of the Endowment's and the Institute's programs. The Committee's conclusion is that the flexibility in these programs needs to be maintained. This flexibility has allowed the Endowments to respond to the changing demographics of our population and the growth of the arts and humanities in America.

The concerns that prompted the 1985 language were primarily ethnic and regional. More recently NHA members have expressed concern that for some areas of scholarly activity the Endowment may have arrived at overly narrow policies that inappropriately restrict the range of projects eligible for NEH support. Two examples are:

- **Foreign Language Education** - A recently introduced requirement for submission of language learning project proposals to NEH's Education Division restricts eligibility to projects involving "study and discussion of significant literature, history, philosophy, and art related to it." Language education specialists (including MLA leaders) have indicated that this requirement discourages applications for projects in elementary and many intermediate foreign language learning projects.

- **Undergraduate Curriculum Projects** - A central concern of NEH's Division of Education Programs is to improve education in the humanities. The Association of American Colleges reports that the Division's narrow concern with 'pure' humanities and great texts-centered projects discourages projects aimed at promoting linkages between humanities and other areas such as engineering and business. AAC officials suggest that there is a lack of sympathy for applied projects at NEH that doesn't allow for the connecting of humanities with other academic areas.
3. **Support for Institutions**

The recent imbroglio over the decision to cutback support for the New York Public Library after 17 years of special NEH grants has given renewed focus to a long-standing debate on whether there are circumstances in which federal support should be made regularly available for the operation of non-profit cultural institutions that can demonstrate certain criteria of nationalness. At the present time, perhaps the majority of the institutions that form the infrastructure of the scholarly enterprise do not have adequate income to sustain regular operations but at the same time are increasingly dependent on raising funds from foundations and other institutions that are dedicated to innovation and that are often restricted from providing long-term or sustaining support. The American ethos is grounded in the belief that, with the obvious exceptions of such federal entities as the Library of Congress, the independence and diversity of our cultural organizations generally run counter to any sustaining federal responsibility for such organizations. But since long before the establishment of NEH, there have been those who argued that there is a national interest and stake in the health of these organizations. That view is nicely summarized in a 7/6/88 letter to the *New York Times*, in which then-President of the Rockefeller Foundation Richard W. Lyman wrote "Surely, its [NEH's] mandate, as a Federal agency, is different from that of the big foundations. It has a responsibility for the overall health of the humanities in the United States that no private foundation has."

- Should the reauthorization process be used to begin seeking the establishment of a program that could provide operating support to private humanities organizations along the lines of the Institute of Museum Services? (IMS' General Operating Support program awards virtually unrestricted operating funds through competitive grant competitions. Non-profit Institutions that meet various criteria, including exhibition of tangible objects to the public on a regular basis, are eligible. The largest awards are $75,000. FY-89 appropriation: $22,270,000.) Such a program could operate either as an activity within NEH or as a separate entity operating under the umbrella of the National Foundation for the Arts and the Humanities (a la IMS).

- Should NEH support under selected programs such as Challenge Grants be broadened to make eligible activities that are not innovative? Perhaps it should be possible for an organization to submit proposals to NEH to continue performing non-innovative but important functions for the scholarly enterprise. Such proposals could be judged through peer review but on the basis of quality and significance of the activity and only incidentally in terms of innovation.

In order to secure legislative changes along either of these lines, several rather formidable problems would have to be favorably resolved, including:
The direct benefits that the public gains from institutions that receive support with taxpayer dollars have to be clear and compelling. The argumentation for the IMS (for which, incidentally seven years elapsed between initial conceptualization and enactment), prominently features the need for public access to collections of tangible objects and the ongoing expense that museums sustain in providing such access.

Any such proposals could and in all likelihood would be viewed as attempts to garner support for elitist institutions at the expense of actual or potential organizations of a more populist bent;

Defining the categories of institutions that would be eligible poses problems (e.g., independent, free standing, non-profit organizations that are not museums or institutions of higher education...);

For research libraries, perhaps the clearest category of organizations that would be included under an IMS-like program, the Higher Education Act/Title II-C "Research Library Resources Grant" program administered by the Department of Education could be cited as providing at least partially overlapping federal support. (The HEA II-C program has been able to provide nearly $6 million annually in recent years.)

A program to initiate ongoing support for existing institutions (plus or minus innovation) may be particularly difficult to launch in an atmosphere of deficit reduction, budget cutting, etc. If, as seems likely, the NEH "pie" is seen as shrinking or at best holding its own, strong opposition to shifting available resources in this direction can be anticipated.

4. Graduate Fellowships/Dissertation Support

Should NEH be encouraged or directed to initiate a fellowship program for graduate students?

Support for graduate students in the humanities, especially for the dissertation writing phase, has long been viewed by higher education leaders, scholars, and others as inadequate. Progress made in the 1960s in broadening federal opportunities for humanities students has eroded enormously in recent years. When contrasted with the resources available to students in the physical, biomedical, and social sciences, available support for students in the humanities meager indeed. A major element in the relatively sharp contrast between the humanities and the various sciences is the structure of research in the sciences that commonly involves extensive use of research and laboratory assistants (often in paid positions that directly support work on dissertation topics).
The NEH has a long standing policy against providing support for research or other activities in pursuit of an academic degree (with the exception special programs for Historically Black Colleges and Universities). The policy dates from the early days of NEH when, in a 1967 hearing, Senator Pell and Barnaby Keeney (the first Chairman of NEH) agreed that the then Office of Education was the appropriate locus for such programs. (NEH's authorizing legislation carries no prohibition of support for the earning of academic degrees.)

Some of the factors NHA needs to consider on this issue are:

- The policy against NEH support for degree-earning activity, is believed to have considerable support on Capitol Hill. In addition, some of the antagonism toward higher education institutions displayed by Congress in recent years has been directed toward graduate students (e.g., in tax policies).

- Students in the humanities who have earned fewer than 20 graduate credits are eligible for the Javits fellowship program, administered by the Department of Education. A new program with significant overlap could be vulnerable to charges of redundancy. On the other hand, the Javits program has encountered many problems over the last several years, especially in terms of administration and selection procedures.

- At the present time, there are strategies whereby the near-equivalent of dissertation support could be awarded by NEH. For example, NEH official indicate a willingness to consider proposals from institutions in which graduate students are supported while participating in activities aimed at improving teaching (e.g., a program aimed at expanding student exposure to interdisciplinary approaches to broad issues).

- Some may be expected to argue that there is a surplus of PhD's in many disciplines and therefore aiding in the production of additional doctorates is not sound policy. (NHA can argue that more recent information suggests that we face a dearth of PhD's.)

B: ISSUES OF INTEREST BUT LACKING A PERCEIVED NHA CONSENSUS

5. Research: Specialization and Significance

Specialization and specialized research not only are defining characteristics of contemporary scholarship but also ready targets for attacks by the unsympathetic. In general, scientists have been more successful than humanists in blunting attacks on specialization (e.g., 'golden fleece awards') with memorable examples of arcane or seemingly obscure work that contribute significantly to resolution of highly visible problems.
As components in debates over federal humanities policies, these issues have tended to be framed in terms of specialized = narrow and broad = significant. The first of the ten recommendations offered in *Humanities In America* is:

I. Colleges and Universities

- Our society's understanding of the humanities ultimately depends on colleges and universities. To counter the excesses of specialization and to strengthen the contributions the academy can make to society, those who fund, publish, and evaluate research should encourage work of general significance.

As noted above, the Alliance is operating on the assumption that all of the NEH's recommendations from the two Congressionally mandated studies will surface in one form or another in the reauthorization process. The development of an appropriate NHA strategy will be challenging.

6. Qualifications for the NEH Chair

Some critics of recent appointments have called for the development of legislative wording that would tighten the qualifications for Chairperson so that nominees would be selected from among individuals of recognized distinction in the humanities.

The present wording in the law is as follows:

Sec. 7

(b)(1) The Endowment shall be headed by a chairperson, who shall be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

There is much anecdotal evidence, as well as the records of past nomination hearings (especially that of Edward Curren in 1985), that Congress is unlikely to be sympathetic to the addition of requirements such as advanced degrees or experience with identified institutions or the like.

7. Awards Procedures & Peer Review

At least some aspects of the procedures under which NEH awards grants are almost guaranteed to come under review during reauthorization. During 1985, in hearings in the House, considerable attention was directed to peer review at the two Endowments during which charges of cronyism (conflict of interest), ideological interference, and tolerance of pornography were leveled against the Endowments. While in that instance, most of the fire was directed at NEA, the result of all this was that NEA and NEH were both required to submit reports on their peer panel review processes:
Sec. 10

(f) Not later than October 1, 1987, each Endowment shall submit to the Congress a report detailing the procedures used in selecting experts for appointment to panels and the procedures applied by panels in making recommendations with respect to approval of applications for financial assistance under this Act, including procedures to avoid possible conflicts of interest which may arise in providing financial assistance under this Act.

The Chairman's powers on use of peer panels is quite broad:

Sec. 10 (a)

(4) to utilize from time to time, as appropriate, experts and consultants, including panels of experts, who may be employed as authorized by section 3109 of title 5, United States Code:

and in continuation of (a)

In selecting panels of experts under clause (4) to review and make recommendations with respect to the approval of applications for financial assistance under this Act, each Chairperson shall appoint individuals who have exhibited expertise and leadership in the field under review, who broadly represent diverse characteristics in terms of aesthetic or humanistic perspective, and geographical factors, and who broadly represent cultural diversity. Each Chairperson shall assure that the membership of panels changes substantially from year to year, and that no more than 20 per centum of the annual appointments shall be for service beyond the limit of three consecutive years on a subpanel. In making appointments, each Chairperson shall give due regard to the need for experienced as well as new members on each panel.

One of the issues which could arise is that of Standing Peer Panels. Unlike a number of other granting agencies including NEA and the National Science Foundation, NEH has not used standing panels but rather appointed new panels for each competition (following various Congressional rules as to the number of repeat panelists permitted, regional and ethnic/minority participation, and so forth). The NEH began an experiment earlier this year through the appointment of standing panels for all peer review in the Education Division for a three year period.

Arguments in favor of standing panels include: Panelists gain expertise through serving on panel (and therefore become more effective); visibility of the panelists to the scholarly community adds protection against conflicts of interest; likewise, the panelists gain a wider awareness of trends in the field and share that with the NEH staff. Opponents of panels argue: Standing panels invite lobbying on individual proposals; politically motivated panel appointments would have opportunities to exercise inappropriate influence over a longer period of time.

A key concern that the Alliance must weigh into a decision on whether to raise issues about peer review is the range of attitudes about the peer process in Congress. Many on the Hill, including
some members of the authorizing committees, are skeptical of peer
to favoring elite institutions, elite
Finally, as the hearings in 1985
illustrate, the topic tends to unleash a number of forces that are
not friendly or well disposed to scholarly research.

C. SOME OTHER POTENTIAL ISSUES

8. Powers of the NEH Chair

The authority granted the Chairperson of NEH concentrates power
strongly in that office. All grants (even individual fellowships)
are from the Chairman -- Unlike NSF, no final decisions on grants
are made at the division or National Council levels. In practice,
the NEH Chairs also control or share control with the White House of
all appointive positions.

The NEH and NEA Chairs enjoy equivalent authority. During the past
year, there has reportedly been talk among some constituents of NEA
that changes might be sought in the powers of the NEA Chair to
restrict grant making authority. The model would be to make the
Endowment(s) Chair's authority more like that of the IMS Director
(who advises the Board rather than visa versa).

Key passages on the authority of the NEH Chair and the National
Council on the Humanities from the present legislation are
reproduced as Attachment 3 (pages 20-23 below).

9. Qualifications for Appointment to the NEH Council

In 1985, the wording on qualifications for appointees to the
National Council was strengthened in terms of "expertise and
experience, and representativeness of diverse cultures and
backgrounds." There have been mixed reviews as to whether the
strengthened wording has resulted in more appropriate nominations.
The present law is as follows:

Sec. 8. (a) There is established in the National Endowment for
the Humanities a National Council on the Humanities.

(b) The Council shall be composed of the Chairman of the Na­tional
Endowment on the Humanities, who shall be the Chairman of the Council, and twenty-six other members appointed by
the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.
from private life. Such members shall be individuals who (1) are se­lected from among private citizens of the United States who are
recognized for their broad knowledge of, expertise in, or commit­ment to the humanities, and (2) have established records of distin­guished service and scholarship or creativity and in a manner
which will provide a comprehensive representation of the views of
scholars and professional practitioners in the humanities and of
the public throughout the United States. The President is request­ed in the making of such appointments to give consideration to
such recommendations as may from time to time be submitted to
him by leading national organizations concerned with the humanities. In making such appointments, the President shall give due
regard to equitable representation of women, minorities, and indi­viduals with disabilities who are involved in the humanities.
10. Mandated Studies on Selected Issues

Directives to the Endowments for various kinds of mandated studies are always a possibility in reauthorization. The House tends to be more likely to request such studies. NHA will remain alert to proposals for such studies and may also wish to consider actively seeking one or more studies. As discussed above on page 3, NHA would want to weigh decisions in this area very carefully.

The following section of the 1985 legislation that mandated American Memory is included to illustrate how Congress approaches this type of legislative assignment:

Section 10

(e)(1) The Chairperson of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Chairperson of the National Endowment for the Humanities, with the cooperation of the Secretary of Education, shall conduct jointly a study of—

(A) the state of arts education and humanities education, as currently taught in the public elementary and secondary schools in the United States; and

(B) the current and future availability of qualified instructional personnel, and other factors, affecting the quality of education in the arts and humanities in such schools.

(2) The Endowments shall consult with the Committee on Labor and Human Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives in the design and implementation of the study required by this subsection.

(3) Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of the Arts, Humanities, and Museums Amendments of 1985, the Endowments shall submit to the President, the Congress, and the States a report containing—

(A) the findings of the study under paragraph (1);

(B) the Endowments’ views of the role of the arts and humanities in elementary and secondary education;

(C) recommendations designed to encourage making arts and humanities education available throughout elementary and secondary schools;

(D) recommendations for the participation by the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities in arts education and humanities education in such schools; and

(E) an evaluation of existing policies of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities that expressly or inherently affect the Endowments’ abilities to expand such participation.

(f) Not later than October 1, 1987, each Endowment shall submit to the Congress a report detailing the procedures used in selecting experts for appointment to panels and the procedures applied by panels in making recommendations with respect to approval of applications for financial assistance under this Act, including procedures to avoid possible conflicts of interest which may arise in providing financial assistance under this Act.
11. Declaration of Purpose

Section 2 of the NFAH Act is reproduced to increase understanding of the context in which Congress has justified federal support for humanities activities. The core of the Congressional findings have come down largely unchanged since the early hearings of 1963-65. The two major additions have been a finding on museums (point 6, below) and a clause on education and recognition of our cultural diversity (point 8). The latter was added in 1985. In the event NHA decides to pursue support for institutions presented as Issue 3 (page 5 above), a concept of justification along the broad lines of this section would be in order.

DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

Sec. 2. The Congress hereby finds and declares—

(1) that the encouragement and support of national progress and scholarship in the humanities and the arts, while primarily a matter for private and local initiative, is also an appropriate matter of concern to the Federal Government;

(2) that a high civilization must not limit its efforts to science and technology alone but must give full value and support to the other great branches of scholarly and cultural activity in order to achieve a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, and a better view of the future;

(3) that democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens and that it must therefore foster and support a form of education and access to the arts and the humanities designed to make people of all backgrounds and wherever located masters of their technology and not its unthinking servant;

(4) that it is necessary and appropriate for the Federal Government to complement, assist, and add to programs for the advancement of the humanities and the arts by local, State, regional, and private agencies and their organizations;

(5) that the practice of art and the study of the humanities requires constant dedication and devotion and that, while no government can call a great artist or scholar into existence, it is necessary and appropriate for the Federal Government to help create and sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent;

(6) that museums are vital to the preservation of our cultural heritage and should be supported in their role as curator of our national consciousness;

(7) that the world leadership which has come to the United States cannot rest solely upon superior power, wealth, and technology, but must be solidly founded upon worldwide respect and admiration for the Nation's high qualities as a leader in the realm of ideas and of the spirit;

(8) that Americans should receive in school, background and preparation in the arts and humanities to enable them to recognize and appreciate the aesthetic dimensions of our lives, the diversity of excellence that comprises our cultural heritage, and artistic and scholarly expression; and

(9) that, in order to implement these findings, it is desirable to establish a National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities.
12. **Definition of the Humanities**

The disciplinary definition of the humanities was derived, with minor tinkering, from the report of the ACLS' Commission on the Humanities (1963-64). While not changed in terms of the disciplines included, some reconsideration of the overall definition is likely. Two likely areas are:

- The wording "those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods" has been scrutinized regularly and could easily become an issue again.
- "The application of the humanities to the human environment... our diverse heritage" is the kind of wording around which issues may form.

**DEFINITIONS**

**Sec. 3. As used in this Act—**

(a) The term "humanities" includes, but is not limited to, the study and interpretation of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism, and theory of the arts; those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life.

13. **Authorization level**

At the time of each reauthorization, new ceilings are established for the agencies. The present legislation has:

**Sec. 11**

(d)(1) The total amount of appropriations to carry out the activities of the National Endowment for the Arts shall not exceed—

- (A) $167,060,000 for fiscal year 1986,
- (B) $170,206,400 for fiscal year 1987, and
- (C) $177,014,656 for fiscal year 1988.

(2) The total amount of appropriations to carry out the activities for the National Endowment for the Humanities shall not exceed—

- (A) $139,878,000 for fiscal year 1986,
- (B) $145,057,120 for fiscal year 1987, and
- (C) $150,859,405 for fiscal year 1988.

Parity between NEH and NEA was raised successfully as an issue in the recently completed appropriating process. NHA will want to keep an eye on this issue but offer direct suggestions only in terms of new or increased program activities, not parity.
The recommendations of this report are made with that end in mind. In the spirit of Tocqueville, they recognize that there are concerns to be met as well as great strengths on which we can build.

I. Colleges and Universities

- Our society's understanding of the humanities ultimately depends on colleges and universities. To counter the excesses of specialization and to strengthen the contributions the academy can make to society, those who fund, publish, and evaluate research should encourage work of general significance.
- Excellence in teaching, as well as excellence in research, should be rewarded; and crucial to excellent teaching in the humanities, it should be recognized, is an approach that emphasizes the enduring human value of history, literature, and philosophy.
- Colleges and universities should work toward intellectually coherent curricula. Undergraduates should study texts of Western civilization and should learn how the ideals and practices of our society have evolved. Students should also be encouraged to learn about other cultures.
- Parents and prospective students should consider what it is a college or university expects students to learn. Whether the institution has established a substantial and coherent curriculum is a crucial factor to keep in mind when choosing a school.

II. Television

- Television can be the friend of the book, and there should be further efforts to use television to encourage reading. Both public and private funders of educational television should continue to support productions that are book-related. Network television programs should present books and learning as an important part of everyday life.
- Television has, in its own right, vast democratic potential for education in the humanities. Scholars and filmmakers working together can create highly original works that encourage thought and teach us about the past. Such efforts merit the continued support of those who fund television productions.
- Excellent films in the humanities should be made widely available. With reasonable pricing and wider distribution, these films can become a more important resource for both formal and informal education.

III. The Parallel School

- Museums, libraries, educational television, state humanities councils, and historical organizations now provide such extensive education in the humanities that they form a kind of parallel school. The achievements of the groups that comprise this school should be recognized; their efforts to reach citizens who have not in the past participated in educational programs should be encouraged by all who support this work.
- The parallel school not only draws strength from our colleges and universities, it has strengths to offer as well. Institutions of higher education should work more closely with other cultural organizations and reward academic scholars who help provide high-quality programs for general audiences.
- Millions of adult Americans, through their participation in public programs, have come to affirm the importance of the humanities. They can be a force for change. These citizens should become more actively engaged in efforts to support substantive and coherent humanities education in our schools and colleges.

The National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency that supports scholarship, research, education, and public programs, can play an important role in many of these undertakings; but it should also be a limited one. "A government, by itself," Tocqueville noted, "is equally incapable of refreshing the circulation of feelings and ideas among a great people, as it is of controlling every industrial undertaking." What impressed him as he viewed our young nation was the power of individuals banding together in associations to accomplish desired ends; and there are plentiful examples of this in the humanities: groups of citizens joining together to give time and treasure to cultural activities and institutions; new cultural institutions forming and older ones reforming themselves to provide learning to general audiences; scholars from colleges and universities working with those who provide public programs in efforts that benefit both the academy and society.

Ultimately, if learning increases, it will be because individuals, associating freely, join in commitment to the goal. So it is, as Tocqueville thought, that in a great democracy, feelings and ideas will be renewed, sympathies will be enlarged, and the life of the mind will thrive.
of culture. The story of past lives and triumphs and failures, the
great texts with their enduring themes—these do not necessarily
provide the answers, but they are a rich context out of which our
children’s answers can come.

It is in this spirit, then, that the following recommendations are
made:

I. More time should be devoted to the study of history, litera-
ture, and foreign languages.

—Much that is in school curricula now under the guise of “social
studies” should be discarded and replaced with systematic study
of history. What goes under the name of “social studies” in the
ey early grades should be replaced with activities that involve imagi-
native thought and introduce children to great figures of the past.

—Both history and enduring works of literature should be a part
of every school year and a part of every student’s academic life.

—Foreign language study should start in grade school and con-
tinue through high school. From the beginning, it should teach
students the history, literature, and thought of other nations.

II. Textbooks should be made more substantive.

—Reading textbooks should contain more recognizably good lit-
erature and less formulaic writing.

—History textbooks should present the events of the past so that
their significance is clear. This means providing more sophisti-
cated information than dates, names, and places. Textbooks
should inform students about ideas and their consequences;
about the effect of human personality; about what it is possible
for men and women to accomplish.

—in literature, history, and foreign language classes, original
works and original documents should be central to classroom
instruction.

III. Teachers should be given opportunities to become more
knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach.

—in their college years, future teachers should be freed from
excessive study of pedagogy so that they can take more courses
in subject areas like history, literature, French, and Spanish.

—Teacher preparation and teacher certification must be indepen-
dent activities. This will help ensure that education courses
taken by prospective teachers are of value to effective teaching.

—Higher education liberal arts faculties must recognize their
responsibility for the humanities education of future teachers.
Further, these faculties must play a greater role in the continu-
ing education of teachers.

—School district should invest less in curriculum supervisors,
instructional overseers, and other mid-level administrators and
more in para-professionals and aides who can relieve teachers of
time-consuming custodial and secretarial duties. This will help
accomplish two important goals: It will give teachers time to
study and think, and it will put them, rather than outside educa-
tion specialists, in charge of what goes on in the classroom.

Because American education is—and should be—a local respon-
sibility, implementation of these recommendations will fall largely
to policy makers in the states, educators in the schools, and
scholars in colleges and universities. Implementation will fall
above all to local school boards, parents, and other concerned
citizens.

But I do not mean merely to set an agenda for others. There are
efforts that the National Endowment for the Humanities can and
will undertake. Indeed, there are many we have already begun,
such as seminars and institutes that provide teachers the oppor-
tunity to study important texts.

We all have a stake in seeing to it that the humanities are
properly taught and thoroughly learned in our schools. We all
have a stake in making sure our children know the shape of the
river they are traveling.

Carrying that shape in memory will not guarantee wisdom or
safety for them or any generation. But there are few surer guides
through dark nights—or sunny days as well.
### From the Editor

By now few of us can be unaware of the heightened public attention the academy has been receiving. A good deal of it seems healthy, reflecting society's wish to ensure the continued strength of a system that Frank Newman described in *Higher Education and the American Resurgence*, the 1985 report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, as "the best in the world" (xvi). But some of it has been troubling and has damaged, in the opinion of Gary H. Quehl, president of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, faculty "self-esteem and the public esteem of our performance." (xxii) But comment. "I am disturbed by the professor bashing that I see at many meetings on higher education," seems increasingly appropriate in the light of recent attempts to characterize—one might even say "caricature"—humanities scholars and teachers in ways that both overlook individual variations and obscure curricular and disciplinary realities.

I fear that Lynne V. Cheney's *Humanities in America: A Report to the President, the Congress, and the American People* will perpetuate these misunderstandings. Because of space restrictions, I will limit my remarks to two major points, but I invite readers to comment more generally on the report for future *Newsletters* or *For Profession 89*, responding either to the points I raise here or to other important matters Cheney discusses—for example, the effects of research on teaching, the undergraduate curriculum, and the relation between the academy and the public. Cheney's thesis, as she headline writer put it, is: "Many Parakeet of Culture but Few Study It." In her own words.

In 1988 it is possible to answer that our society has made progress in expanding images of human possibility for its members, in increasing awareness of what human excellence can mean, in developing insight into the past and all it has to tell us of triumph and disappointment, of choices made and not made and their consequences. Much remains to be done, but the task, in terms of the general public, has been well begun.

It is not possible to make such a positive assessment when one looks at our colleges and universities. At the same time that public interest in the humanities has grown, study of these disciplines has declined among formally enrolled students. Between 1966 and 1986, a period in which the number of bachelor's degrees awarded increased by 88 percent, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded in the humanities declined by 33 percent. Foreign language majors dropped by 29 percent; English majors, by 33 percent; philosophy majors, by 35 percent; and history majors, by 43 percent.

The most recent statistics, for both majors and enrollments, seem to show a bottoming out of this long downward slide and even slight movement upward; nevertheless, the loss remains dramatic. In 1965–66, one of every six college students was majoring in the humanities. In 1985–86, the figure was one in sixteen; one in every four students, by contrast, was majoring in business.

The thesis of the NEH report rests on a contrast between increased public interest in the humanities, which is measured by attendance at and viewing of cultural events, and decreased interest among students in American colleges and universities, which is measured by the declines in the number of humanities majors and in enrollments in humanities courses from 1966 to 1986. Though Cheney notes that these declines may be partly the result of students' vocational interests, concern over the cost of their educations, and limited exposure to the humanities before they enter college, she also says:

But colleges and universities share responsibility for the present situation. Since 1964 when William Bennett then Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities wrote the report *To Reclaim a Legacy*, many observers have pointed to the need for institutions of higher learning to reestablish a sense of educational purpose, to give form and substance to undergraduate curricula, and to restore the humanities to a central place.

For some time humanists have been haunted by the declines in enrollments and majors. Initially, the declines damaged morale and disrupted intellectual and professional lives. More recently, they have given rise to the charge that humanists themselves were partly responsible. In *To Reclaim a Legacy*, William Bennett wrote:

Conventional wisdom attributes the steep drop in the number of students who major in the humanities to a concern for finding good-paying jobs after college. Although there is some truth in this, we believe that there is another equally important reason—namely, that we in the academy have failed to bring the humanities to life and to insist on their value.

Cheney reasserts Bennett's charge and, in the paragraph quoted above, implies an even broader cause: the absence of educational purpose and of form and substance in "undergraduate curricula" in American colleges and universities.
In my opinion, although the statistical information about the declines provided in *Humanities in America* is accurate, it is insufficient for judging the health of the humanities, for assigning shared "responsibility for the present situation" to colleges and universities, and for assuming specific causes within the academy. To explain why I lay out the facts of the matter as they concern the modern languages. and I apologize to those MLA members for whom this is an old story. Public retelling seems necessary just now.

A fuller understanding of the recent history of BA degrees granted in the modern languages requires a consideration of data prior to the NEH report's starting point of 1966. Table 1 provides information about BA degrees that go back to 1949–50. We use 1959–60 as a starting point for examining recent trends because degree production peaked in 1959–70 and the previous ten years are comparable to the subsequent ten years, during which degree production declined. (I am indebted to Bettina Huber, the MLA's director of institutional research, who prepared the tables below and analyzed the data presented here. I have incorporated her analysis.)

One question any interpreter of these data must face is: What is the "normal" number or percentage of degrees produced by our fields? Between 1959–60 and 1969–70, the number of degrees granted in English increased by 180%, while the total number of BAs granted increased by only 102%. Then, between 1969–70 (the peak year) and 1979–80, the number of degrees granted in English declined by 53%, while the total number of BAs granted increased by 17%. That is, the number of BA degrees granted in English declined more rapidly during the 1970s than did the number of BA degrees granted overall. But, during the 1960s, the number of degrees granted in English increased more rapidly than did the number of BA degrees granted overall.

The trends in BA degrees granted in foreign languages are similar to those in English. Between 1959–60 and 1969–70, the number of degrees granted in foreign languages increased by 330%, while the total number of BAs granted increased by only 102%. Between 1969–70 (the peak year) and 1981–82, however, the number of degrees granted in foreign languages declined by 51%, while the total number of BAs granted increased by 20%. Like the pattern in English, the number of degrees granted in foreign languages declined more rapidly during the 1970s than the number of BA degrees granted overall. During the 1960s, the number of degrees granted in foreign languages increased much more rapidly than the number of BA degrees granted overall.

In the light of these data, it is hard to understand why the NEH selected the midpoint of a decade of unprecedented growth as the base year for judging the health of the humanities in higher education. As I consider table 1, I wonder whether the fifties provide a better departure point.
for evaluating trends in degrees granted. Were the dramatic increases of the sixties more normal than the declines of the seventies, or does the stability of the fifties represent the norm? As to cause, are we to conclude, as the NEH report suggests, that increases in enrollments are tied to a clear educational purpose and curricular solidity, which were present in the sixties and then disappeared in the seventies? The question remains: How do we determine which decade was normal?

Table 2 shows the number of bachelor's degrees conferred in three liberal arts disciplines and in three disciplines with immediate and unambiguous vocational relevance. One point is clear: from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s there was a shift from traditional liberal arts disciplines to fields with immediate vocational utility, as the NEH report notes. But the report does not indicate that the bachelor's degrees granted in the physical sciences declined as much as those in the humanities did and that degrees granted in the social sciences declined considerably more. We choose 1974-75 as the base year for calculating the percentage changes presented in table 3 because it is close to the peak year for the liberal arts disciplines and marks the starting point for growth in degrees granted in the other disciplines.

Are modern language departments attracting their "fair" or "normal" or "ideal" share of majors? It's hard to say, given the unusual factors that have affected enrollments since the sixties. For example, the unusual size of the baby boom for calculating the percentage changes presented in table 3 because it is close to the peak year for the liberal arts disciplines and marks the starting point for growth in degrees granted in the other disciplines.

Table 2. Bachelor's Degrees Conferred in Selected Disciplines, 1970-85

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<td>No. of Bachelor's Degrees Granted</td>
<td>143,511</td>
<td>153,260</td>
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<td>15.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Bachelor's Degrees Granted</td>
<td>193,116</td>
<td>203,617</td>
<td>186,153</td>
<td>164,252</td>
<td>150,383</td>
<td>141,178</td>
<td>135,452</td>
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<td>20.5</td>
<td>20.2</td>
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<td>16.3</td>
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<td>No. of Bachelor's Degrees Granted</td>
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<td>90,700</td>
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<td>83,859</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Bachelor's Degrees Granted</td>
<td>114,865</td>
<td>126,263</td>
<td>133,010</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Bachelor's Degrees Granted</td>
<td>2,388</td>
<td>4,304</td>
<td>5,033</td>
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<td>8,719</td>
<td>15,121</td>
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<td>0.28</td>
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<td>0.95</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Bachelor's Degrees Granted</td>
<td>50,046</td>
<td>51,265</td>
<td>46,852</td>
<td>49,283</td>
<td>62,375</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>89,270</td>
<td>96,105</td>
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<td>No. of Degrees Granted per 100 Graduating Students</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Bachelor's Degrees Granted</td>
<td>839,730</td>
<td>992,362</td>
<td>922,933</td>
<td>919,549</td>
<td>921,390</td>
<td>935,140</td>
<td>969,510</td>
<td>979,477</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


1Humanities = area/ethnic studies, foreign languages, letters, liberal/general studies, multidisciplinary studies, philosophy, and religion, theology, and visual/performing arts.
2Social Sciences = psychology and social sciences.
3Physical Sciences = life sciences, mathematics, and physical sciences.
I am confident that MLA members would welcome an elaboration of Cheney’s views on this important matter. Phyllis Franklin

For the list of works cited, see the next page.
Sec. 7 - Establishment of the National Endowment for the Humanities

General authority for programming domains

(c) The Chairperson, with the advice of the National Council on the Humanities (hereinafter established), is authorized to—

(1) develop and encourage the pursuit of a national policy for the promotion of progress and scholarship in the humanities;

(2) establish and support research and programs to strengthen the research and teaching potential of the United States in the humanities by making arrangements (including contracts, grants, loans, and other forms of assistance) with individuals or groups to support such activities; any loans made by the Endowment shall be made in accordance with terms and conditions approved by the Secretary of the Treasury;

(3) award fellowships and grants to institutions or individuals for training and workshops in the humanities. Fellowships awarded to individuals under this authority may be for the purpose of study or research at appropriate non-profit institutions selected by the recipient of such aid, for stated periods of time;

(4) initiate and support programs and research which have substantial scholarly and cultural significance and that reach, or reflect the diversity and richness of our American cultural heritage, including the culture of a minority, inner city, rural, or tribal community;

(5) foster international programs and exchanges;

(6) foster the interchange of information in the humanities;

(7) foster, through grants or other arrangements with groups, education in, and public understanding and appreciation of the humanities;

(8) support the publication of scholarly works in the humanities; and

(9) insure that the benefit of its programs will also be available to our citizens where such programs would otherwise be unavailable due to geographic or economic reasons.

(b) Except as provided in subparagraph (B) of this paragraph, the total amount of any payment made under this subsection for a program or project may not exceed 50 per centum of the cost of such program or project.
Other authority (including peer panels)

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

Sec. 10. (a) In addition to any authorities vested in them by other provisions of this Act, the Chairperson of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Chairperson of the National Endowment for the Humanities, in carrying out their respective functions, shall each have authority—

1. to prescribe such regulations as the Chairperson deems necessary governing the manner in which the Chairperson’s functions shall be carried out;

2. in the discretion of the Chairperson of an Endowment, after receiving the recommendation of the National Council of that Endowment, to receive money and other property donated, bequeathed, or devised to that Endowment with or without a condition or restriction, including a condition that the Chairperson use other funds of that Endowment for the purposes of the gift, except that a Chairperson may receive a gift without a recommendation from the Council to provide support for any application or project which can be approved without Council recommendation under the provisions of sections 6(f) and 8(f), and may receive gift of $15,000, or less, without Council recommendation in the event the Council fails to provide such recommendation within a reasonable period of time, and to use, sell, or otherwise dispose of such property for the purpose of carrying out sections 5(c) and 7(c);

3. to appoint employees, subject to the civil service laws, as necessary to carry out the Chairperson’s functions, define their duties, and supervise and direct their activities;

4. to utilize from time to time, as appropriate, experts and consultants, including panels of experts, who may be employed as authorized by section 3109 of title 5, United States Code;

5. to accept and utilize the services of voluntary and uncompensated personnel and reimburse them for travel expenses, including per diem, as authorized by law (5 U.S.C. 73b-2); for persons in the Government service employed without compensation;

6. to make advance, progress, and other payments without regard to the provisions of section 3648 of the Revised Statutes (31 U.S.C. 529);

7. to rent office space in the District of Columbia; and

8. to make other necessary expenditures.

In selecting panels of experts under clause (4) to review and make recommendations with respect to the approval of applications for financial assistance under this Act, each Chairperson shall appoint individuals who have exhibited expertise and leadership in the field under review, who broadly represent diverse characteristics in terms of aesthetic or humanistic perspective, and geographical factors, and who broadly represent cultural diversity. Each Chairperson shall assure that the membership of panels changes substantially from year to year, and that no more than 20 percent of the annual appointments shall be for service beyond the limit of three consecutive years on a subpanel. In making appointments, each Chairperson shall give due regard to the need for experienced as well as new members on each panel.
Sec. 8 - Establishment of the National Council on the Humanities

Powers of the Council

(f) The Council shall (1) advise the Chairperson with respect to policies, programs, and procedures for carrying out the Chairperson's functions, and (2) shall review applications for financial support and make recommendations thereon to the Chairperson. The Chairperson shall not approve or disapprove any such application until the Chairperson has received the recommendation of the Council on such application, unless the Council fails to make a recommendation thereon within a reasonable time. In the case of any application involving $30,000, or less, the Chairperson may approve or disapprove such request if such action is taken pursuant to the terms of a delegation of authority from the Council to the Chairperson, and provided that each such action by the Chairperson shall be reviewed by the Council: Provided, That the terms of any such delegation of authority shall not permit obligations for expenditure of funds under such delegation for any fiscal year which exceed an amount equal to 10 per centum of the sums appropriated for that fiscal year pursuant to subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1) of section 11(a).