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November 2016

Senate Speeches on the Arts and Humanities (1994-1996): Speech 11

Claiborne Pell

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Recommended Citation

Pell, Claiborne, "Senate Speeches on the Arts and Humanities (1994-1996): Speech 11" (2016). *Senate Speeches on the Arts and Humanities (1994-1996)*. Paper 12.
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STATEMENT OF SENATOR CLAIBORNE PELL

Mr. President, as we debate the federal government's role in American culture, I would like to note the extraordinary efforts the Endowment has made in recent years to encourage cultural development in all states, regions and communities across the country. Before the establishment of the Arts Endowment, access to cultural events was largely limited to major urban centers around the country -- New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago. Today, cultural programs flourish in every region of the country. Since assuming the Chair of the Endowment, Ms. Jane Alexander has carried the message around the country that the Endowment is here to support cultural programs in all communities of our nation. In fact, the success rate of applicants from less populous states is often much higher than for applicants from the large states. Less than one-quarter of the applications received from California and New York are funded. In contrast, 40% or more of the applications received from Alaska, Delaware, North and South Dakota, West Virginia and Wyoming are successful in receiving funding from our Arts Endowment. Thirty-one other states have 25 to 40% of their applications funded.

Another program of note is the Arts Endowment's Underserved Communities Set-Aside Program which specifically supports projects to broaden public access to the arts in underserved rural and inner city areas. The reauthorization legislation recently reported out of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee requires that at least 10% of Endowment funds would go for this purpose.

Mr. President, the arts play a unifying role in our society, incorporating the heritage of many groups and individuals and providing bridges for understanding, creating a distinctly American culture. Federal support preserves America's cultural heritage and broadens access to the arts to a greater audience so that not only the elite but all citizens can enjoy the arts. Providing assistance to artists and arts institutions allows cultural institutions and performing arts groups to keep ticket prices low and to offer educational programs and services for the disabled.

Mr. President, the Arts Endowment is making its best efforts to bring the arts to as many communities around the nation as it can, given its limited funding. This amendment will make its continued work possible.