

5-24-1990

## Reauthorization: S. 2724 (1990): Memorandum 03

Alexander D. Crary

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MEMORANDUM

May 24, 1990

TO: Senator  
FROM: ADC  
RE: Telephone Interview with NEWSWEEK

NEWSWEEK may do a cover story on the NEA crisis in its next issue. The reporter, Dan Glick, is likely to try to reach you over this week-end in RI. Dennis Riley knows about this and will coordinate with you.

Glick's story will be an overview of the whole controversy. He will want your view of how we have reached this point. Why is it so nasty? What factors are at play? Is it the only conservative cause that's left?

BACKGROUND: It was over a year ago that the crisis began with the photo by Andres Serrano entitled PISS CHRIST. Serrano artist received an award of \$15,000 through a program administered by the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in North Carolina. Only a portion of the award money came from the NEA..the rest contributed by Rockefeller Foundation. The religious right pounced on this work and the crisis began.

It was because of the right wing pressure on Congress that the Corcoran decided to cancel its showing of the touring Mapplethorpe exhibition. This exhibition had been partially supported with a \$30,000 NEA grant made to its originating institution, the Center for Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania. It is important to recall how this all started because the honest and normal way these grants were handled seems to have been totally lost in the ensuing controversy. The right wing has continued to keep the issue alive with regular mailings to their constituencies and frequent letters to Congress. The issue has proved to be a successful fund raiser for the right wing. The fact that homophobia continues to fuel so much of the fire is rarely acknowledged. Those who claim this is one of the few conservative causes left are correct in my view.

With NEWSWEEK I urge you to stress the positive aspects of what the NEA has done as well as your role in it:

20 grants out of 80,000 that have caused controversy

AC  
see pls let me  
out of state of  
RI mail on  
his subject.

25 years of federal support for the arts has changed the face of cultural life in the US. The federal role must be maintained for the leadership it can provide

Full confidence in John Frohnmayer

Support for President Bush's reauthorization proposal: 5 year extension of current law - no harmful content restrictions. We may have to accept some procedural changes to make peer review as fair, open and accountable as possible but even these should be kept to a minimum in your view because the system in place has proven to be a good one. You are convinced that the fabric of values which characterizes this country can withstand the rare pitfalls accompanying our freedom of expression.

Cite People for the American Way poll (attached)

People in business, education as well as the arts support a strong Endowment and its "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval" grants.

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UPDATE ON REAUTHORIZATION (FYI):

The arts "summit" called by Pat Williams is still meeting on Thursday afternoon. Rick Jerue reports that progress is slow, disagreements abound, and that he doesn't expect any kind of major breakthrough. He clarified for me, however, that Williams intends to stick with the Administration bill which he has introduced. (You will introduce it in early June) This bill will be the framework for any additional amendments that may come out of the "summit" which is what we intend to do in the Senate. My sense on our side is to avoid the appearance that the arts community is dictating the reauthorization amendments. This approach by Williams may pose problems for him later. Hatch and Kassebaum are still considering what measures might be needed and when it is best to insert them. As I told you before, the Committee Democrats want to do only what is absolutely necessary to keep us together.