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STATEMENT OF SENATOR CLAIBORNE PELL IN SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

Mr. President, I oppose this further funding cut to the Arts Endowment. Debate on the National Endowment for the Arts generally centers upon the two or three arts grants a year that become controversial. I believe it to be most important to the debate to point out some of the great good done by the other 99 3/4% of Endowment funds. Recent studies have shown that arts teach young people creativity, as well as a sense of accomplishment and motivation that actually increases the chances that at-risk children will stay in school. Last year the Endowment’s Arts-in-Education program distributed $5 million in partnership grants to the states to help pay for artist residencies in schools and art teacher training.

The Endowment gave a grant to the Arizona Commission on the arts to help establish APPLE Corps, a partnership between artists, prosecutors, private enterprise and educators designed specifically to help people stay off drugs. Similarly, in South Central Los Angeles, the Lula Washington Dance Theater runs an after school dance movement series for at-risk youth entitled "I Do Dance, Not Drugs" for young people in partnership with Pacific Bell, the Los Angeles Police Department and the Endowment.

In my own state of Rhode Island, the Endowment funds a partnership between the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education in which theater, music and design are integrated into the curriculum of the Davies Career and Technical High School. The program has been shown to involve Rhode Island children in the arts and to improve overall discipline and attendance at the school.

These programs and hundreds like it will be seriously and adversely impacted by the cut in the Endowment’s funding. Once again, I urge my colleagues to support the Endowment and the good work being done by its new Chairperson, Jane Alexander. Mr. President, such a significant cut would be most damaging to important mainstream programs around the country and do little to encourage that the one or two controversial grants out of four thousand each year are weeded out. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.