1992

Legislative History of the Reauthorization of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) (1990): Report 11

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The Stearns amendment that reduces the appropriation for the National Endowment for the Arts by $3 million (agreed to by a recorded vote of 251 ayes to 171 noes, Roll No. 304).

Rejected:

The Thomas of Wyoming amendment that sought to strike language that deducts $155,275,000 from Federal onshore mineral leasing receipts prior to the division and distribution of such receipts between the States and the Treasury.

The Duncan amendment that sought to reduce the appropriation for the Bureau of Indian Affairs by $34,009,000 (rejected by a recorded vote of 135 ayes to 266 noes, Roll No. 301);

The Walker amendment that sought to strike $25,805,000 for fossil energy research and development (rejected by a recorded vote of 158 ayes to 262 noes, Roll No. 303);

The Burton amendment, as modified, that sought to reduce by 1 percent each amount appropriated in the bill that is not required to be appropriated or made available by a provision of law (rejected by a recorded vote of 197 ayes to 218 noes, Roll No. 305);

The Young of Alaska amendment was offered but subsequently withdrawn that sought to reduce the National Park Service construction budget by $5,558,000.

The Clerk was authorized to make technical and conforming changes in the bill.

Privilege of the House—Public Disclosure: By a yeas-and-nay vote of 223 yeas to 196 nays, Roll No. 307, the House agreed to the Kleczka motion to table H. Res. 526, relating to the privileges of the House.

Cable Competitiveness: By a yeas-and-nay vote of 340 yeas to 73 nays, Roll No. 313, the House passed H.R. 4850, to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to provide increased consumer protection and to promote increased competition in the cable television and related markets.
AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. STEARNS
Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Clerk reads as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. STEARNS: Page 25, strike lines 3 through 26 and insert the following:

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

GRANTS AND ADMINISTRATION

For necessary expenses to carry out the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1988, as amended, $145,829,000 shall be available to the National En- dowment for the Arts, of which $13,300,000 shall be available for the National En- dowment for the Arts; $30,000,000 to be available for the National Endow- ment for the Arts. This appropriation shall be available for the purpose of making grants and productions in the arts through assistance to groups and individuals pursuant to section 6(c) of the Act, and for administering the functions of the Act.

MATCHING GRANTS

To carry out the provisions of section 10(a)(2) of the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1988, as amended, $50,000,000, to remain available until expended, for the National Endow- ment for the Arts, of which $3,000,000 shall be available for purposes of section 6(c).

Provided, That this appropriation shall be available only for the purpose of offering to any group or individual at least a 30 percent match with Federal assistance for the purpose of making grants and productions in the arts through assistance to groups and individuals pursuant to section 6(c) of the Act, and for administering the functions of the Act.

My amendment will not dismantle the NEA—It will not cripple it. What this amendment will do is keep spend- ing at last year's funding level which was a generous $176 million. Frankly, I think that is too much, however, the savings for my colleagues have voted otherwise.

What my amendment does is provide a compromise. It provides the oppor- tunity for both supporters and oppo- nents of the NEA to vote for fiscal re- sponsibility without devastating the organisation.

Both the National Taxpayers Union and Citizens Against Government waste have expressed their strong sup- port for this amendment. They think it is the least we can do given the enor- mity of our deficit.

When American businesses and fami- lies are cutting back across America, it is the duty of Congress to cut back as well. Congress must reduce the deficit.

We have to ask ourselves "Is an in- crease of almost $3 million to the NEA absolutely necessary?"

Mr. Chairman, I thank my colleagues for this amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore (Mr. OBERSTAR). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Chairman, I rise to reduce the funding level for the Na- tional Endowment for the Arts to the fiscal year 1992 level. The committee has provided an increase of almost $3 million to the NEA. With our deficit skyrocketing, and Federal programs taking budget cuts, I do not believe we can justify such an increase.

In the past several weeks we have cut housing and facilities for our Armed Forces, we have eliminated funding for the superconducting super collider, we have cut our legislative budgets—yet we are going to increase funding for the NEA?

As Representatives of the people, we have to explain our spending practices to our constituents. This amendment will ask why the NEA received more funding than breast cancer research last year. They will ask why we are increasing its funding by almost $3 million during a severe recession. The amendment will explain how such inequity and lack of priorities to my constituent in central Florida.

This body has just defeated an amendment from the gentleman from Illinois that would have cut all funding for the Arts Endowment. This amendment, but believe some very good points were made by the other side.

Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 1 minute.
Mr. Chairman, I just want to tell the very distinguished Republican, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMSTRONG) what another distinguished Republican thinks about the NEA. I am referring to Mr. Winton Blount, the former Postmaster of Alabama, whom I listened to his words in testimony during our hearings:

"An NEA investment of $33,000 in the Alabama Shakespeare Festival this year is helping create a new southern artistry, providing a professional theater for hundreds of thousands, generate $16 million in tourism and educate 50,000 students. Where else do so few Federal dollars have a larger effect and enormous ultimate value? Any business owner would be happy with a fraction of such returns on their investments. I therefore trust that you will continue to invest precious Federal resources where such a high and valuable return is achieved.

That is from Postmaster Winton Blount.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 15 seconds to say that giving in the United States of America by private funding of the arts has reached $7.8 billion last year. This is just a pitfall.

We will still have art education. Neither Mark Twain nor Ernest Hemingway received funding from the Government. Many of our greatest artists have contributed to the cultural development of our society without the support of Federal funds.

Mr. Chairman, I yield the balance of my time to my colleagues, the gentleman from California (Mr. DORNAN).

Mr. Chairman, just very quickly, we are going into debt, this House is putting the Nation into debt $1,065,000,000 today, tomorrow, Sunday, every religious holiday right through this fiscal year. We just cannot afford not to cut something out of this.

I raise in support of the Stearns amendment. Madonna signed a contract for $55 million, Mike Jackson for another $30 million. That is roughly two-thirds of this budget. Those people are not going to pay storage on their money. Let the artists making these incredible, astronomical incomes, let them help and pick up a little slack. We cannot afford it.

Mr. YATES. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KOSTMAYER).

Mr. KOSTMAYER. Mr. Chairman, 30 years ago John Kennedy said that one of the most important resources of our strength of our society is not only by measuring the strength of our military, but by measuring our commitment to the arts, to dance, to literature, to sculpture, to poetry, to painting, to music. By that measurement, this country does not have a very deep commitment to the arts. This amount the gentleman from Florida seeks to cut is about 9 hours of Pentagon spending. This is one of the finest, most deep investments. It sustains some of the very best impulses of people, young people especially, all across the country. We ought to be doing more to promote this program, to promote the concerns of people who care about literature, dance, painting, sculpture, poetry, and all the arts.

This is a modest commitment to sustain such programs in small towns, big cities, and schools across the country. Surely the Congress can sustain and support the arts. I urge rejection of the amendment.

Mr. DAVIS. Mr. Chairman, I just want to point out to my colleagues, the highest rated public broadcasting show was the Fourth of July concert on the Mall, and hundreds of thousands of people were there. It was a great program, and it was funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Mr. YATES. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the balance of my time.

In conclusion, I merely want to reiterate what the distinguished gentleman from Montana (Mr. WILLIAMS) pointed out, and he should know what he is talking about because he wrote the authorizing legislation for the National Endowment for the Arts. As he pointed out, any amount of money made available above $175 million goes for two purposes. First, it goes for arts education for our children in this country, which is important at this time when so many of the local schools are cutting back on their arts and music programs. Second, the balance of the funding will go to sustain the programs of other arts organizations in the States.

So I hope that the Stearns amendment is voted down.

Mr. WEISS. Mr. Chairman, I want to express my opposition to the Stearns amendment. This amendment does not signal fiscal prudence but an attempt to strangle an agency that is given the mission of funding every type of artistic group throughout the Nation and promoting American creativity and culture.

The NEA's work in promoting the arts is not favorable to the conservative flow of our national identity and soul. On a purely pragmatic level, they are also our greatest export, an important means to local economic development, and one of the greatest educational tools for our children.

NEA funds comprise one one-hundredth of 1 percent of the current budget. For this tiny sum, the NEA funds generate 10 times that amount in private funds. For instance, for fiscal year 1991, NEA Program grants totaling $140 million generated $1.13 billion in non-Federal dollars. These are the most acute examples of catalytic. More so, they play a real and vital role in community vitalization, and thanks to the ingenuity of NEA initiatives and the committed work of those in the arts, they affect at-risk students, the elderly, the physically challenging any aspect of the community.

The argument is made that we cannot afford the arts in these times. I would assert that the arts are more important than ever. At a time of racial and class division in our cities, the arts are one of the most effective ways of promoting understanding.

The $3 million which Mr. STEARNS seeks to cut is an increase that will, on the whole, go to arts in education programs. Is that the gentleman's intent, to do away with a small increase for funds for arts programs for our children?
The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. BURTON OF INDIANA

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Clerk read a copy of the amendment, which was agreed to.

AMENDMENT

Amended by Mr. Burton of Indiana: Page 97, after line 5, insert the following section:

Sec. 311. Each amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act that is not required to be appropriated or otherwise made available by provision of law is hereby reduced by 1.46 percent.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BURTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Chairman, I want to congratulate the previous speaker for getting an amendment passed that reduced spending to last year’s level. It was not that hard, I would be asking to vote not to make spending cut, to live within the budget that we passed last year, the spending limits of last year.

Every single appropriation bill that we have passed this year so far, in total has been higher than last year. Agriculture is $3.5 billion above last year; District of Columbia bill is $58 million above last year; Treasury, Postal Service, $2.9 billion above last year; and the bill is going to hit $185 million above last year.

Now, what my amendment does is cut the spending in this bill back to last year’s spending levels, as the previous amendment did for the National Endowment for the Arts.

The reason I think this is important is because of the statistical information on the two charts I am going to show you. There is a book that I have been talking about called “The Coming Economic Depression” by a man named Burkett, that I have been asking all of the Members to read. If any of you want a copy of it, I have it in my office and I am glad to give you a copy.

Mr. Chairman, in that book it shows a chart put out by the Federal Reserve Board showing the progression of the national debt. This was the national debt in 1980, and at $4.077 trillion in debt right now. This is where we are going to be, conservatively, conservatively, by the year 2000, or 7.5 years from now.

Now, what this means simply is a take a look at that, $3.5 trillion—it means that the interest alone on the national debt is going to be $1.3 trillion, which is almost the total cash revenues we are bringing into the Treasury today. Very simply, it means we are not going to bring in enough taxes just to pay the interest on the debt, and all of the other problems facing this country.

So we have to get control of our appetite for spending. A good place to start is to freeze spending at last year’s spending levels. In addition to that, I have said it before and I will say it again and again and again, we have to address the problem of entitlements. I know that is a dangerous thing to say, politically, but the fact of the matter is if we do not slow the growth in entitlements, the people on fixed incomes, on social security, are going to be left without any help, and we may have 17 years from now will be paying $25 or $35 for a loaf of bread.

Now, why do I say that? I say that because the Federal Reserve Board has the right to monetize the debt. And if we cannot get enough tax revenues to pay the interest on the debt, we are going to have to pay off part of the debt, a large part of it, and they will monetize maybe $3 trillion or $5 trillion in debt.

When they print that much money, we are going to have hyperinflation and the people that we really want to help in this country, people on welfare, people fixed incomes, are going to be the hardest hit.

So we have to pinch a little bit now so we do not face hyperinflation later, which will cause economic chaos later in this country.

I will say it one more time: All I am asking for is a reduction in this bill to last year’s spending levels, to try to get control of spending now and in the future so we will not face hyperinflation down the road.

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I yield to my colleague, the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. REGULA. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to, for the record, point out that we have already cut $59 million out of budget authority by the amendments which have been adopted. So, in effect, the gentleman’s amendment would take us below last year’s level because we were at $385 million over last year on the BA, with $59 million we have cut thus far by amendment action and in reality—I do not know if the gentleman would want to modify his amendment—but it does in fact take us $59 million below last year’s level.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I would be very happy, in accordance with my colleagues, to modify my amendment to take it down to last year’s spending level, and I would so move, Mr. Chairman.

the CHAIRMAN. Does the gentleman ask unanimous consent to modify his amendment? And if so, he would modify his amendment in what way?

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Just to take it down to last year’s levels, not below last year but to last year’s spending level.

the CHAIRMAN. The Chair would ask the gentleman to specify a change in the actual percentage level in the bill.

Mr. YATES. Mr. Chairman, reserving the right to object, we would like to have specific numbers.