

University of Rhode Island

DigitalCommons@URI

---

Berman, Ronald: Memoranda (1975-1984)

Education: National Endowment for the Arts  
and Humanities, Subject Files I (1973-1996)

---

7-22-1976

## Berman, Ronald: Memoranda (1975-1984): Correspondence 21

Claiborne Pell

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell\\_neh\\_I\\_10](https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_10)

---

### Recommended Citation

Pell, Claiborne, "Berman, Ronald: Memoranda (1975-1984): Correspondence 21" (1976). *Berman, Ronald: Memoranda (1975-1984)*. Paper 6.

[https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell\\_neh\\_I\\_10/6](https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_10/6)

This Correspondence is brought to you for free and open access by the Education: National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, Subject Files I (1973-1996) at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Berman, Ronald: Memoranda (1975-1984) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu).

D R A F T

CP:me

July 22, 1976

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I do hope you will support my motion to table the nomination of Dr. Ronald Berman to be Chairman of the National Endowment on the Humanities.

I would emphasize that I have nothing against Dr. Berman personally, but I believe the national interest would best be served by such tabling for the following basic two reasons: first, when this legislation was enacted, our original concept was that the term of Chairman would be four years, unless he did an exceptional job in which he might be reappointed. As a general rule, however, we all believed that four years was about right and that then a new person with new ideas should be permitted to make his or her contributions. The only exception we have made in this regard is in the reappointment of Ms. Nancy Hanks, who has really done an exceptional job. The idea of a four year tour of duty has proven first be effective in the role of Commandant of the Marine Corps, Commandant of the Coast Guard and is, I believe, a pretty good \_\_\_\_\_. If in this case, where Dr. Berman has done a fair job, I believe that this position should be of indefinite tenure.

Secondly, Dr. Berman is a scholar, who sincerely believes that Washington be a "laying-on-the-hands" process, which can best determine what should be the best course of humanities throughout our nation.

In this regard, the Arts Councils, which as you will recall are appointed by Governors and \_\_\_\_\_ by Legislatures, have proven far more effective in spreading influence around our communities and multiply in effectiveness than have the Washington-created Humanities Councils. The evidence of this is when there are thousands of Arts Councils throughout our nation, while there have been very little increase in the number of Humanities Councils over and beyond the original fifty states. The people on both Councils of the Committee serve gratuitously, which is as they should be, but the Arts Councils because of their appointments from within their states have been more conspicuous and involved in their state's arts programs. This is understandable since in the Humanities set-up, Dr. Berman chooses one individual in the state and that individual in turn will pull together his fellow Humanities Council members. Then once they are installed they stay in office for indefinite periods of time.

Again, one finds here a translation and extension in the difference between the arts and humanities groups and there is little turnover to the Humanities Council as opposed to a fairly substantial one in the Arts Council.

As I think you will agree, I am not a disagreeable fellow, but I really take great pride in the Arts and Humanities Endowments, and as Chairman of your Subcommittee have followed them ever since they developed out of Senator Javits' and my legislation. In this regard, I guess our particular responsibility seems through my idea to originally merge them into the same groups as the Arts Endowment.

In the earlier days it was the Humanities who had the greater \_\_\_\_\_, but the intervening years have, partly because of the locally organized states councils, have become more a part of the \_\_\_\_\_ and have outstripped the humanities.

I recognize at this time that you are considerably pressured from your constituents, some of who have been energized by the Councils from the states who are worried that they might not be reappointed. In fact, I think that they should be. But the politics of the whole situation is that Ms. Hanks and the National Council of the Arts have criticized the fifty states' Arts Councils. Because the states' Arts Councils are

appointed locally while Dr. Berman has admirers, friends, and dependents in the fifty states, he has himself made the appointments to the various Humanities Councils.

Party politics does enter into this. For instance, on \_\_\_\_\_, I wrote President Ford urging that Dr. Martin Myerson, President of Pennsylvania University or \_\_\_\_\_, (Title), man with similar breadth and leadership to take on this role. On the more \_\_\_\_\_, I found in this whole country that many individuals of the Humanities Councils have said to me privately and have, incidentally, said to other members of the Committee privately that they very much hope that a new Chairman be appointed. However, in just about every case these individuals find that their institution's funds depend on Dr. Berman, who gives away some X million dollars each year and for that reason they do not have the courage to take a public position. This has happened to me even in Committee with the authors or leaders of support (can we make this plural?).

Finally, from the viewpoint of my own welfare and peace of mind, I would be far better off, if I simply let the appointment go through. By objecting to the appointment, I have secured very critical editorials and comments in various newspapers, including my own State's, and have found a good many people interested in humanities, but perhaps not in

the mainstream, who have become quite angry toward me. This naturally disturbs me because I consider the Humanities Council one of my constituencies.

If I did what was best for me I do believe it would be right for the program and for the objection we share together in its original nature.

For all of these reasons, I hope you will support me.

Warm regards.

Ever sincerely,

CP