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Biddle, Livy: Chairman of the National  
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## Biddle, Livy: Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (1977-1979): News Article 26

Robert J. W.

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the arts, which is not new, contrary to that columnist's Constitutional reference, is a valuable training ground for young aspiring writers, composers, artists.

Thousands of future politicians, business people and journalists are gliding through college on national

Unless an artist becomes famous in this country, he is looked upon as a second class citizen who doesn't deserve serious consideration. It is time to wake up and recognize this nation's most valuable resource. — Elliot Niles Gross, Spring Green.

THE PITTSBURGH PRESS

November 23, 1977

## U.S. Subsidies For Artists Supported

The Oct. 21 Press article by James J. Kilpatrick, "Must U. S. Subsidize The Arts?", raised the fundamental question: What is the government doing in the arts business?

Recall, if you will, that Pittsburgh artist LeAnn Wilchusky received a \$6,000 grant from the National Endowment to film rolls of crepe paper as they were dropped from an airplane.

Back in Washington, Sen. William H. Proxmire derided the use of federal funds to support such "artistic flings" and awarded Ms. Wilchusky his Golden Fleece of the Month.

The logical extension of such an argument, according to Mr. Kilpatrick, is that the government shouldn't even be involved in the arts business. The gist of his argument is this:

from Article 1 through Article 7 and find not one shred of authority for Congress to spend the people's money in the arts business."

In defense of the arts, I offer the following points:

✓ Sen. Proxmire and Mr. Kilpatrick have set themselves up as infallible judges of art. But are they qualified to judge the works of Ms. Wilchusky or, for that matter, the works of any artist?

Consider, for example, the plight of an aging artist who plans to create a work of art using only a pair of scissors and pieces of construction paper. Would the artist obtain a grant from the National Endowment if its reins were held by the likes of these gentlemen? Not

of his most brilliant works with these very tools in the late 1940s.

✓ Mr. Kilpatrick argues that Congress has not a shred of authority to appropriate people's money to the National Endowment. If we strictly interpret the wording of the Constitution, we find that Congress has no authority to provide for a standing army, fund the Louisiana Purchase, or support the farming community, either. Yes, only by stretching the general welfare clause to its utmost limit can even a tenuous rationalization be found for these expenditures.

Having said something about why the government is involved in the arts business, the question becomes academic: What is Mr. Kilpatrick doing in the journalism business?

ROBERT J. WASHBAU