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Reagan Administration: Funding Cuts News Articles (1981-1982): Report 01

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The AMA urges favorable action on legislation that would make the VA special pay program a permanent one, and that would provide compensation levels for VA physicians comparable to those received by physicians in other branches of government service.

Sincerely,

JAMES H. SAMMONS, M.D. ●

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF
THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS FUNDING

HON. TED WEISS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 7, 1981

● Mr. WEISS. Mr. Speaker, we are at a critical juncture in the history of public support for the arts. Just last year the Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education reauthorized the National Endowment for the Arts for 5 more years. We felt that the Endowment's importance to this country warranted not only its continued existence, but considerably more money with which it could perform its vital mission.

Today the Reagan administration is asking Congress to appropriate to the arts a mere \$88 million. This figure is \$140 million less than that authorized by the Congress last year; half of the amount proposed by President Carter before leaving office; \$70 million less than the Art Endowments budget for the current year; and only \$36 million more than the \$52 million that the President has requested for funding of military bands.

At my request, the Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education held two hearings examining the impact of the proposed budget cuts on the artistic community. At these hearings we heard extensive testimony which contradicted the President's justifications for slashing Federal support for the arts. For example, contrary to the administration's contention that endowment funding has led to a reduction of private and corporate support for the arts, we learned that corporate support has risen from \$22 million in 1967 to \$436 million in 1979, an increase of 1,881 percent. Individual contributions have also increased dramatically in the 15 years since the establishment of the endowment, up from \$226 million to \$2.7 billion.

While it is true that many Federal programs are being cut under the administration's economic proposal, few are being slashed as dramatically as the arts with such counterproductive results. Recently Ms. Leontyne Price testified before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on behalf of the arts and eloquently warned the subcommittee of the destruction a 50-percent cutback in Government funding will impose on American cultural life. Following is an article which appeared in the Washington Star on March 28 excerpting some of Ms. Price's testi-

mony, which she sang before the subcommittee, in support of funding for the arts.

A MELODIC PLEA FOR THE ARTS FROM DIVA
PRICE

(By Ruth Dean)

The Senate hearing room filled with the deep, rich tones of Metropolitan Opera diva Leontyne Price's voice Thursday, raised in a singing plea to Congress to protect the arts from proposed budget cuts.

"Save the performing arts," she sang in a lyric she improvised to the tune of Irving Berlin's "God Bless America."

"Arts that we love./ Stand beside us/and guide us/through the night with those funds from above.

"From the mountains to the prairies/to the oceans white with foam,/please save the performing arts;/don't let us fall."

The packed hearing room and the two senators from the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on the Interior who came to hear her testimony gave Price a standing ovation. But she'd much rather they'd heeded her earlier spoken words protesting the Reagan administration's proposed 50 percent budget cut to the National Endowment for the Arts. Price said she "can't understand why you're going to stop the flow" when for so many years, the arts have been used to showcase the United States' preeminence in the arts around the world.

The alternative, she warned, would be to make this "a total cultural wasteland, and simply kill, bash and dash the dreams of some fantastic, wonderful kids I've met on my tours across the country."

As an example of what the arts endowment has done for communities across the land, Price, pointed to the funding of the Dance Theater of Harlem.

The dance theater is such a "strong force" in Harlem, she said, that "for thousands of kids it's an alternative for drug addiction; running around, hustling, crime and alcoholism. And it has even affected their families concerned with their image. They make costumes, run errands, and baby-sit with some of the kids who need help."

This sort of venture, she said, illustrates "the very necessity in the community for such a driving force for so many kids and their future."

Price was more fortunate than witnesses who followed her at the Thursday hearing. She, at least, had two senators to talk to. But after her appearance, a quorum call summoned away Sens. Mark Andrews, R-N.D., and Thad Cochran, R-Miss. They never returned, even after what might have been considered a reasonable, interval to vote, as Rep. Sidney Yates, D-III., did twice during the previous day's testimony in a House hearing.

The subcommittee chairman, Sen. James A. McClure, R-Idaho, never appeared either—not even for the testimony of esteemed scholar-investor Buckminster Fuller. However, Louise McClure was overheard in the hall outside the hearing room inviting Price to lunch with her and the senator.

The 85-year-old Fuller, humanist and inventor of the geodesic dome, appearing on a panel in defense of the National Endowment for the Humanities, had no one to expound to except the committee chief clerk who presided for the rest of the session. The clerk reassured witnesses the senators would see "everything you have submitted into the record."

Asked afterwards how he felt facing all those empty chairs, Fuller said, "Those vacant seats were ominous. It's really a shocking thing they weren't there. I came a long way to talk to them."

During his testimony, Fuller said he "deplored cutting down an appropriation that has to do with what people do with their minds." It has taken man 10 billion years to get to this stage, and even in his own lifetime Fuller said, "two billion more galaxies have been discovered in the universe, and we may not be here in another week; things are that critical."

A visionary of the future, whose new about-to-be-published book, "Critical Path," embodies some of this philosophy, Fuller said he sees as the only salvation of the planet "an intergration of all nations." Taking afterwards, he said he didn't even see Soviet Russia as a threat. "They're just trying to show off their way of life, but I think they're finding out not even that worked. All these earthly differences melt away before our confrontation with the universe." ●

A USELESS OBSTRUCTION

HON. G. WILLIAM WHITEHURST

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 7, 1981

● Mr. WHITEHURST. Mr. Speaker, an editorial which appeared in the April 6, 1981, issue of Business Week made an excellent point with regard to the need to expedite customs inspections at gateway points, and I am pleased to share this with my colleagues.

Although I have the highest regard for our conscientious, hardworking customs officers, I think it is fair to say that under the present system of regulations, the United States is probably the most frustrating country to enter in the world; I believe that anyone who has traveled abroad to any extent will agree with this conclusion. I know of no other country where the waiting lines are longer or entry takes more time, and I am introducing legislation today to help remedy this, by authorizing the Customs Service to institute methods to facilitate and expedite passenger inspections at entry points by means of what has become known as the "red door/green door" system.

If we are to encourage tourism on an international scale, I believe it is incumbent upon us to make visiting the United States a pleasant experience from the very beginning. At the present time, our welcome mat is very much in need of repair.

I commend the editorial to my colleagues, and I would welcome their support for this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A USELESS OBSTRUCTION

If President Reagan's budget cutters are serious about taking the waste and inefficiency out of government operations, they could do not better than to start with the U.S. Customs Service. Here is an agency that has increased its budget from \$54 million in 1960 to \$770 million this year. In the same period, it has doubled its staff, which now numbers around 14,000. And yet it is known around the world as the most pica-yune, quibbling, time-wasting customs system on earth. The time it costs interna-