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Iannone, Carol: National Council on the Humanities Nomination (1991): Speech 04

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STATEMENT BY SENATOR CLAIBORNE PELL
on the Nomination of Carol Iannone
to the National Council on the Humanities

July 17, 1991

As most of you know by now, I have been very troubled by the nomination of Carol Iannone who, while coming from the academic community, does not measure up in stature to Professors Malbin and Mansfield who are also on the agenda today for appointment to the National Council on the Humanities. Her record of service in the humanities is not a distinguished one and her qualifications do indeed fall short of what the NEH enabling legislation expects of such nominees. I must say, however, that I liked Ms. Iannone when I met with her and I admire her stamina for seeing this very difficult situation through to a conclusion. I regret that she has become a symbol in a strident and rhetorical debate that far overshadows what this appointment is really about. *She was caught in a*

non fire between the conservative establishment and liberal establishment, particularly a battle over such a most significant.

As I have tried to make clear over recent years, the political views of a nominee like Ms. Iannone should not disqualify her from appointment to the Council and I do not object to her on these grounds. The statutory language, however, specifically calls for Council members "who are recognized for their broad knowledge of, expertise in or commitment to the humanities and have established records of distinguished service and scholarship or creativity." In my view, Ms. Iannone comes up

short on each of these points.

Last Fall I expressed my concern before the Committee on Labor and Human Resources about the mediocrity of some recent NEH Council appointments and I conveyed these thoughts to the Chairman of the Humanities Endowment at that time. I did so in the hope of achieving a higher standard for nominees to this important and prestigious Council which is charged by law with advising the Chairman on agency policies and programs and, most importantly, with reviewing applications for grant support before funding recommendations are made. *My own suggestions have been repeatedly ignored.*

As with 2010
As one of the founders of the National Endowment for the Humanities, I care deeply about the agency's leadership and its direction and wish to state again, for the record, that I will persist on this critical issue of Council quality. The confidence of the humanities community and the Congress in the NEH has been strong and it is crucial that this confidence be sustained. The best way to reassure the public and to safeguard the quality and integrity of NEH policies and awards is to have the strongest possible National Council on the Humanities.

Each of the Council's 26 members has a central role to play at the NEH. To be effective, they must provide the Chairman with informed and independent opinions on policy and program matters and be scrupulously fair-minded in their thorough review of applications for grant support.

While the Chairman has statutory authority to make final grant decisions, the recommendations of review panelists and Council members should be respected and only on rare occasions and for stated good reasons should these recommendations not be adopted.

I cannot emphasize enough that candidates for this Council, from both the academic and public sectors as well as any so-called "public intellectuals", possess the strongest possible records of distinguished service in the humanities. The Chairman, the grant applicants and the American public deserve nothing less. \$170 million of public money is at stake and it is the Council's responsibility to ensure that these funds are wisely spent to strengthen and enhance the cultural life of our nation.

Finally, it is important to understand in this context that teachers and scholars in the humanities are charged with both preserving traditions and seeking new understandings of these traditions. This double mission has never been simple or without conflict. Therefore, it is incumbent on those who wish to maintain and nurture the central value of the humanities to respect both this dual mission and the need for reasoned and civil debate when conflicts do arise.

*Agree with stated - not a liberal
of the 2nd - have a diversity of views
~~Not just~~*