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Conferees Race Pell, But Not Mell

By Phillip M. Kadis
Washington Star Staff Writer

Senate and House conferees are agonizingly inching their way toward agreement on a bill to extend the arts and humanities endowments.

The question is whether they will be able to wrap it up before the endowments run out of money. Or before the Sept. 13 deadline to complete action on pending legislation or start all over again.

The big hangup is still Sen. Claiborne Pell's plan to restructure the existing state humanities committees along the lines of state arts councils, making them accountable to the elected political authorities in the states instead of the chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Twenty percent of the monies appropriated to the national endowment would be appropriated to the states (or \$200,000 per state) for the state-based programs.

The plan is opposed by the humanities endowment and its chairman, Ronald Berman, whose pending reappointment is opposed by Pell.

PELL SAYS the measure is needed to democratize the humanities programs and develop grass roots support for them. Berman says he fears the restructuring would dangerously politicize the humanities programs that by their very nature deal with the hyper-sensitive area of human values, an area he feels should be immunized from political pressures.

The issue has placed the House and Senate at loggerheads, since the House version does not go as far as the Senate's to incorporate Pell's requirements.

So a conference committee session on legislation that would normally take no more than an afternoon's work has now dragged on for two weeks, with postponements and recesses, skirting of issues and restatement of positions.

"It's the best show in town," said one veteran of legislative affairs. "Too bad the audience is so limited."

THE FOCUS of all the fuss is legislation that would authorize (if all provisions are approved, which they will not be) no more than \$300 million a year or considerably less than a thousandth of the budget.



Sen. Pell, wants lots of czars

If money were the only issue, a compromise might be forthcoming. But it is now a matter of principle and personalities, and it remains to be seen who will be able to rise above both.

Some progress was achieved at last Friday's meeting.

Pell and Sen. Jacob Javits, ranking Republican on the Senate's special subcommittee on the arts and humanities, brought in a compromise package that got the proceedings off dead center for the first time on some of the peripheral issues.

For example, the Senate conferees indicated they were willing to go along with the House decision to place a new Museum Services Institute under HEW instead of the umbrella of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities.

CHAIRMAN PELL, a founding father of the twin endowments, also offered to place a \$10 million arts in education program under the Office of Education, with no funding until fiscal 1978, to avoid duplication with an existing OE program.

But there was no change in the state humanities council proposal, and Pell remained adamant that parity in funding between the arts and humanities endowments should be broken, in favor of the arts.

"The reason I supported parity in the past," said Pell, "and perhaps here I expose my veniality, was because I wanted to get the arts up there on a par with the humanities, which were much stronger then."

Pell believes the arts endowment has since pulled ahead of the humanities in *eclat* and the ability to attract matching funds. It has also attracted more applications, he argued, and should therefore get more funds. (The Humanities Endowment argues that it is able to fund a smaller percentage of its applicants than the arts endowment, and should therefore get more funds, if either endowment does.) The two endowments receive equal appropriations for fiscal '77 in a bill that awaits President Ford's signature.

CONFEREES CLASHED over the Senate bill's \$15 million Bicentennial Challenge Grant provision for the Humanities Endowment, a section sponsored by Javits and inspired by a John D. Rockefeller suggestion to devote the period between the anniversaries of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution's ratification to studies of the problems of the next 200 years.

Rep. John Brademas, D-Ind., charged that the wording of the section "left the door wide open" for the injection of partisan politics into the humanities programs.

"As sensitive as the area of the arts is to political domination, and as careful as we have been to guard against this, the problem is even more acute with the humanities," said ranking House Republican conferee Albert H. Quie of Minnesota.

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CONFEREES

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Javits said he viewed the challenge grants as being used to "chase out crooks" from municipal governments or clean up pollution. Pell suggested "community clean-ups, getting rid of old beer cans."

THAT BROUGHT from Quie an insistence that the funds be used only for the purposes of the humanities. Javits then agreed that they should be only for "cultural purposes" and staff members were directed to draft new language providing for the changes and safeguards.

But it was not until the state humanities councils were taken up that the depth of Pell's feelings about that single issue became apparent.

The humanities, he said, had been more strongly organized than the arts a decade ago when he first authored legislation establishing the endowments.

"When the state arts councils were set up, I wanted the humanities to do the same. But I was a fool at the time and went along with the humanities' insistence that they remain unchanged.

"But the humanities haven't exploded as the arts have. There are more than 1,000 community arts councils where there used to be 100. As far as I know there are only 50 humanities groups."

PELL HAS received an avalanche of mail over the issue, most of it in opposition to his proposal. Brademas said the volume of mail to House members has been so great that the whole endowment bill would be in serious danger of losing with the Senate provision in it.

"I do not believe the mail is completely spontaneous," said Pell, adding quietly that "it has not been pleasant to be the butt of this propaganda campaign."

The senator accused certain columnists and editorial writers who have taken him to task because of the proposal of presenting "the view of those people who are afraid they might not be reappointed."

The issue, he said, is whether control of the humanities should be diversified or dominated entirely from Washington.

"What you have in the arts is 50 arts czars," he said. "In the humanities there is one czar."

PELL SAID people in the humanities privately encourage him to stand by his proposal but publicly refuse to do so for fear of antagonizing "the goose that lays the golden eggs."

Brademas noted that the same thing happened to him when he first proposed turning over 20 percent of the arts endowment appropriations to the state arts councils.

"The arts council officials would testify at committee hearings that they were happy with things the way they were," said Brademas. "And after the hearing they'd tell me pri-

vately 'Don't believe a word of it.'" The state humanities committees now in existence are self-perpetuating groups initially appointed by the Washington headquarters of the humanities endowment. Under Pell's proposals, the states would be given several options in forming councils accountable to elected officials.

"If the decisions are made by the state councils, maybe they won't be as sophisticated as those made in Washington," said Pell. "But out of this will come greater interest and participation in the humanities."

"I do think people without formal education can benefit from the humanities. Give them a room to meet in once a month, and maybe out of this can come a scholar."

AT THE END of the meeting, Brademas pronounced it a "constructive colloquy." Several alternatives

are to be prepared by the staff for the next full meeting Wednesday. (An informal chat will be held today among some of the principals.)

If action on the bill is not completed this week, the outlook grows progressively grimmer.

Congress will recess for the Republican National Convention. Upon return, a major education bill must be handled by essentially the same conferees. And soon after, Sept. 13 will have arrived.

By the end of September, money appropriated for both endowments will have run out. And although money has been approved for fiscal '77, that appropriation is contingent upon passage of the authorization bill now before the conferees.

"It could all come together this week," said one staffer, adding ruefully "or it could all fall apart."