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House Rejects Effort To Slash Theater Funds

Journal-Bulletin Washington Bureau

Washington — Republican efforts to eliminate this year's appropriation for the National Endowment for the Arts, which includes funds that may go to a proposed Providence repertory theater, were defeated in a standing vote in the House yesterday.

The House rejected, 63-to-36, a motion by Rep. H. R. Gross, R-Iowa, to cut seven million dollars earmarked for the arts endowment from the 1.1 billion appropriation for the Interior

Department and other agencies. Of its total appropriation the arts endowment had allocated \$167,000 for each of three theaters, which would provide serious drama for school children starting next fall.

Providence has been assured by Rep. John E. Fogarty that it will be selected as one of the theater sites if local criteria are met. Under the program, classical drama will be presented without charge by professional actors for 32 to 36 weeks of the school year.

Although some Democrats were critical yesterday of a slash of Arts and Humanities Foundation funds from 13.9 to 7 million dollars in a House appropriations committee, no effort was made on the floor to restore cuts. The committee completely eliminated funds for a Humanities Endowment but left the door open for restoration in the Senate.

A stipulation for restoration of funds is a prepared program for the endowment, which must be submitted by the National Council on the Humanities. Dr. Barnaby C. Keeney, retiring Brown University president, is to become council chairman in July.

In yesterday's efforts to further slash funds, Representative Gross described the arts endowment program as a "hearts and flowers" business. He made no detailed criticism of the program, however.

Among those opposing his amendment was Congressman Fogarty. In a prepared statement he said he had given "careful consideration" to the program and further cuts in its funds would be disastrous.

It appeared, however, that House supporters of the arts program were less disturbed about the Gross effort than they were about indications that an appropriations subcommittee intended to exercise close supervision over grants made to institutions and artists under the program.

Mr. Fogarty, who is a member of the subcommittee headed by Rep. Winfield K. Denton, D-Ind, said that the program was designed to be free from bureaucratic control. The House, he said, could change this by allowing one of its committees to serve on the selection board for projects.