Iannone, Carol: Letters Opposing Nomination of (1991): Correspondence 47

Wade Henderson

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July 16, 1991

The Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources
The United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-2101

Dear Senator:

I am writing on behalf of the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP) to express strong reservations about the nomination of Carol Iannone to serve on the National Council on the Humanities. We respectfully urge members of the Labor and Human Resources Committee to carefully review this nomination which bears on the future direction of the National Council on the Humanities.

The National Council for the Humanities reviews grant applications to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The enabling legislation for the Council (specifically, Section 957 (b)) cites "broad knowledge of, expertise in, or commitment to the humanities, and an established record of distinguished service" as a prerequisite for appointment to the panel. A review of Ms. Iannone's curriculum vitae, however, suggests that she does not meet the minimum threshold qualifications for this important post. Certainly, there is the absence of distinguished scholarship that is traditionally associated with the Council.

It is a well established fact that Ms. Iannone has been especially hostile towards the works of well known African American and other minority authors. The NAACP finds the positions expressed in the March 1991 Commentary article "Literature by Quota" particularly disturbing because they are based on ideological considerations, instead of critical analysis of literary merit.

The NAACP does not question the right of Ms. Iannone, or other nominees for the National Council on the Humanities, to express personal opinions and political viewpoints. However, as our society moves towards greater awareness of its multicultural heritage, we believe that those charged with the task of advising the Council to be free of ideological bias.
The NAACP believes that members of the National Council on the Humanities should possess an outstanding record of their own and be able to demonstrate an ability to distinguish between making a critical assessment of cultural achievement and a political analysis of socioeconomic perspectives.

The NAACP also believes that appointees to the Council should understand that a recognition of cultural diversity in the humanities is not inconsistent with a concern for excellence. Unfortunately, Ms. Iannone has failed to demonstrate these qualities.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on this matter.

Sincerely,

Wade Henderson
Director