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By Carla Hall

President Reagan will propose 50 percent cuts in the fiscal 1982 bud-
gets of both the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endow-
ment for the Humanities when he submits his revised budget to Con-
gress.

"It'll be difficult," said NEH chairman Joseph Duffey. "Very difficult."

Both the NEA and the NEH were informed of Reagan's budget decision
yesterday. The NEH budget to be submitted to Congress will go from
the figure of $169 million proposed by former president Carter to $85 mil-

$175 million proposed by Carter to

$88 million.

"It's damnable, absolutely damna-
ble," said actor and singer Theodore
Bikel, a member of the National Coun-
cil on the Arts, the advisory body to the NEA. "It's insupportable and
it's punitive. The next battle-
ground is, of course, the Congress.

We'll have to marshal all the forces
we can to intercede. I've already called
Isaac Stern and Sidney Poitier about
sending telegrams to the White
House. Now they'll have to send them
to the Congress."

Most observers are more optimistic
about the funding picture in Congress.
"Assuming it's a 50 percent," said
Rep. Sidney Yates (D-Ill.), who had
not been notified of the budget figure
yet, "it's too drastic. That may be Mr.
OMB director David Stockman's pri-

ority, but it's not the Congress. I
don't think the Congress will accept
such a low priority for the arts and
the humanities. Mr. Stockman says
that the Endowments have hindered
business from contributing to arts or-
ganizations. He doesn't understand
how it's worked in the past. The En-
dowments have been the trailblazers
for contributions from business, not
the other way around. I think if the
Endowment cuts its contributions, so
will business."

Another member of Congress
agreed that 50 percent cuts would not
go through Congress. "There will be
a number of us suggesting smaller cuts
— like 20 percent. And I think there
will not be strong opposition to that."

But first the Endowments will have
to recalculate their budgets according
to the Reagan administration's sub-
mission. "It's much too early to say
exactly what we will cut," said Duffey.
"The one thing that there is not a
likelihood of is across-the-board cut-
ting. That wouldn't be responsible.
There is a possibility that some pro-
grams will be totally eliminated."

Duffey has asked his staff to look
at "what they could pare, and admin-
istrative implications. For instance, if
you're cutting a program in half, you
have to ask if it's worth continuing the
program at all — or should the money
be put into something else."

The National Council on the Arts
has already discussed in broad terms
possible scenarios for the Endowment
if funds are cut. "It depends on who
you talk to," said Bikel. "Programs in
general would suffer the most. You
can't reduce that much in administrative costs — the funds for staff and
review panels. You will still have the
same grant-application load. You still
need people to read them. In pro-
grams, the marginal things will go un-
der. The Los Angeles Symphony
won't go broke. It's the small theaters,
the small dance companies that de-
pend on that federal dollar. A lot of
those might simply disappear. They
can't go and ask elsewhere for money
unless they have that federal dollar.
That federal dollar is a federal good-
housekeeping seal of approval for
them."