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## Briefing Book: National Endowment for the Arts (1994): Speech 38

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**TALKING POINTS****WHY A NATIONAL ARTS AGENCY IS IMPORTANT AND WHY WE SHOULD NOT INCREASE THE SHARE OF FEDERAL ARTS FUNDS AWARDED DIRECTLY TO THE STATES**

- o **NATIONAL RECOGNITION:** Only a federal agency can provide national recognition for the very best artists and arts organizations - or marshall the resources to identify and support our national cultural treasures. The national recognition that comes with federal support is often critical in leveraging additional funds from the private sector.
- o **FEDERAL LEADERSHIP:** Only a national arts endowment can ensure that progress in arts education, the recognition of folk arts, encouragement of cultural diversity, international arts exchange, etc. occurs evenly throughout the nation. Individuals and institutions in poorer states will always lose out in the absence of a strong national arts agency.
- o **MANY PROJECTS HAVE NATIONAL OR REGIONAL IMPACT:** Endowment supported radio and television programs, and major music and art institutions have national constituencies, and require national support. Teaching fellowships, and theater and dance groups that leave their big city stages and tour the country are examples of arts activities that cross state boundaries - and thus must be federally supported in order to survive.

**EXAMPLES OF T.V.:**

Excellent television including Great Performances, The Metropolitan Center Presents, P.O.V., American Playhouse are all supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

**EXAMPLES OF TEACHING OUTREACH:**

In 1992 a \$22,000 NEA grant to Affiliate Artists of New York City supported the Chamber Music Rural Residencies pilot project which placed chamber music ensembles in rural communities for a full school year. The chamber ensembles taught children in public schools who would not otherwise have benefitted from any music education. Eight community sites in three states -- Georgia, Iowa, and Kansas -- participated. The communities were Tifton, Fitzgerald, and Moultrie, GA; Jesup, Fayette, and Decorah, IA; and Dodge City and Liberal, KS.

Howard University in Washington, DC received a \$100,000 Challenge grant to establish residence appointments at selected historically black colleges and universities for internationally acclaimed African American visual,

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performing, and literary artists. Participating institutions included: Albany State College in Georgia, Alcorn State College in Mississippi, Jarvis Christian College in Texas, Johnson C. Smith University in North Carolina, Norfolk State University in Virginia, and Xavier University in Louisiana.

A \$14,600 Jazz Special Projects grant was awarded to pianist Judy Carmichael of New York to support a series of 25 presentations illustrating the history and development of early jazz piano to high school and college audiences. Ms. Carmichael performed at schools in Louisiana, California, Michigan, New York, Connecticut, Missouri, Colorado, and Washington, DC.

**EXAMPLES OF NEA SUPPORTED TOURS:**

The Spanish Theatre Repertory Company in New York City received a \$100,000 Challenge grant to perform in Spanish theaters throughout the country. The Company performed 16 different productions in 37 theaters, and reached more than 22,000 people in communities that had never seen theater before. The sites included Taos, NM; Kutztown, PA; Manhattan, KS; Lancaster, CA; and El Paso, TX.

In FY 93, Ballet Hispanico will spend two weeks in New York and 16 on tour to communities such as La Crosse, Eau Claire, Amery, Prairie du Chien, and River Falls, Wisconsin; the Dance Exchange (Liz Lerman) of Washington, D.C. is on tour 16 weeks with no home season; the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater had a five week season in New York and will tour 29 weeks; and the Paul Taylor Dance Company based in New York performed two weekends in New York and 20 weeks on tour.

AMAN Folk Ensemble of Los Angeles, received \$70,000 in FY 91 to support rehearsals, domestic touring and educational and performance residency activity. AMAN Folk Ensemble was in residence in Tifton, Ocilla, Moultrie, and Fitzgerald, GA. Other residency sites included Davenport and Bettendorf, IA and Rock Island and Moline, IL. AMAN also conducted workshops and taught K-12 students in Death Valley, CA.

Merce Cunningham Dance Company of New York City received \$373,000 in FY 92 to support its New York and domestic touring season. The company spent nearly a month in residence in Minnesota in February 1993. The company had been performing in Minnesota for three decades and spent two residencies over a period of six years. The company visited Moorhead, North Dakota four times during this period to give classes to the public and performances.

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The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre based in New York City, received \$282,000 in FY 91 to support its New York and domestic touring. During a tour through the south, the company performed in Greenville and Spartansville, South Carolina and Opelika, Alabama. Community members raised \$25,000 to pay for a performance and lecture-demonstration at the local high school.

NEA supported the New York City-based Feld Ballet with \$79,000 for touring in the 1992-1993 season, bringing the company to communities such as Danville, KY; Durham, NH; Lowell, MA; Pomona, NJ; Opelika, AL; Thibodaux, TX; and Lafayette, LA. In addition, in 1991, the Feld Ballet was in residence for 3 1/2 weeks in various rural towns throughout Wisconsin (including the University of Wisconsin-Eau-Claire) and performed in other rural areas such as Boone, NC; and Palmyra, Devault, Williamsport, York, and Kutztown, PA.

- o **ACCOUNTABILITY FOR TAXPAYER DOLLARS:** shifting funds to state administration reduces effective federal oversight and thereby reduces accountability. The huge number of grants awarded by the states (approximately 30,000 annually) makes a close federal watchdog role over their grants impractical.
- o **MANY OF THE AREAS NOW RECEIVING ENDOWMENT FUNDS SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS AND ARTISTS OF TRULY NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE:** An increase in funds distributed on a formula basis to the states correspondingly reduces grants to areas in which artists and arts organizations are most concentrated, including California, Illinois, New York, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Texas. Many of the organizations in these states are important from a national cultural perspective like major museums, symphony orchestras, opera companies etc.
- o **LEVEL OF EFFORT:** State funding for the arts has fallen by 28 percent in recent years. While there is no direct evidence that the recent increase in the Basic State Grant provided by NEA to the states has caused this, the evidence is clear that the increase did little to leverage additional private funding for the arts in those states.
- o **ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS:** Administrative costs are lower at the national level, where economies of scale are greater. A percentage of NEA funds awarded to the states is spent on administering the state programs. We should be funding artists and art organizations with NEA funds, not bureaucrats and administrators.