

1984

Letters (1984): Correspondence 60

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April 11, 1984

Mrs. Thurman Silks
Hopkinton City,
Rhode Island 02833

Dear Mrs. Silks:

Thank you very much for your recent letter and for bringing to my attention the Heritage Playhouse's grant application to the National Endowment for the Arts. Sandy Crary of my staff has told me of his conversation with you but I am glad to have the additional information about the Playhouse and the fine work being done there.

Unfortunately, I do not have any role in deciding who will receive grants from the Arts Endowment. The Endowment, being an independent agency of the Federal Government, was created by legislation that I authored back in the 1960's. An important part of our concept then was to have grant applications reviewed by impartial peer review panels. This means that the Endowment invites professionals in the nonprofit theater, for example, to review applications from others in the same field. No review system is perfect, but after almost 20 years, I believe we have the best possible arrangement to insure fairness and access.

I am always delighted to express my support for any application that comes to a Federal agency from my constituents in Rhode Island. It is best that I contact the Endowment in this regard very soon after the grant request has been made so as to be on record before the review process begins.

In the case of the current Playhouse application, I understand that it will be presented to the National Council on the Arts for final action at the Council's meeting in early May. Despite the fact that 90% of the decision may already have been made, I am sending off a letter to the Chairman of the Endowment to let him know of my interest in this particular application. A copy of my letter is enclosed for your own records. I also am sending along a copy of the Endowment's Guide which briefly describes how the agency operates.

With warm regards,

Ever sincerely,

AC/ap

Claiborne Pell

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