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POLITICS

Liberal to head National Endowment for Humanities

■ University of Pennsylvania President Sheldon Hackney advocates freedom of expression.

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By Irvin Molotsky
NEW YORK TIMES

Washington — The Clinton administration has selected Sheldon Hackney, president of the University of Pennsylvania, to head the National Endowment for the Humanities, a White House official said Thursday. The choice of Hackney, 59, an advocate of freedom of expression, had been expected for weeks.

As university president, he defended the 1989 decision of its

Institute of Contemporary Art to exhibit photos by Robert Mapplethorpe which some members of Congress called obscene.

The official announcement, which the official said would be made Friday, is subject to Senate confirmation.

Shared view

The job, the highest governmental post in academic scholarship in history and philosophy, usually goes to someone who reflects the president's views.

Conservatives William J. Bennett and Lynne V. Cheney, headed it in the Reagan and Bush administrations, while liberal Joseph D. Duffey led it under Carter.

The announcement had been delayed, said congressional aides

and academic leaders, in hopes that choices for related positions could be made at the same time.

No one at the White House returned telephone calls to comment on the matter. But a congressional aide said Thursday that the White House had decided to go ahead with the appointment of Hackney.

Hackney, who also could not be reached, could create a stir on Capitol Hill. His nomination is likely to provoke opposition from conservative senators, like Jesse Helms, R-N.C., a foe of the Mapplethorpe exhibit.

Helms was in North Carolina on Friday and his staff did not return calls seeking comment on Hackney's nomination.

Praised by Pell

The selection was praised by others, including Sen. Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., chairman of the sub-

committee that is to act on Hackney's nomination. Pell called him a "distinguished educator and an excellent choice."

Hackney, who was born in Birmingham, Ala., has written extensively about the South in the 1960s, including a book, *Populism to Progressivism in Alabama*.

He has an undergraduate degree from Vanderbilt University and graduate degrees from Yale University. Before being named president of the University of Pennsylvania in 1981, Hackney was a professor at Princeton University and president of Tulane University.

He is married to Judith Judkins Durr, a lawyer and a colleague of Hillary Rodham Clinton at the Children's Defense Fund. Mrs. Clinton is to speak at the University of Pennsylvania's commencement this year.

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