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Federal Advisory Council to the Arts, United States Arts Foundation: Hearings (August 1962): Speech 07

Daniel W. Millsaps

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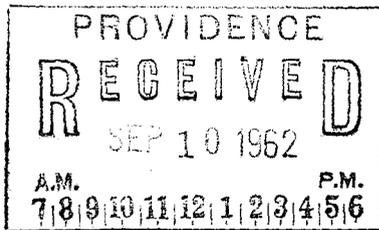
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United States Senate

MEMORANDUM

Isabelle Leeds



STATEMENT TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE
IN SUPPORT OF S.741, S.785, and S.1250
BY DANIEL.W. MILLSAPS
August 30, 1962

Mr. Chairman, I am Daniel W. Millsaps, writer, publisher and practicing artist. I have received my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Art from the University of South Carolina, and I have been fortunate to have had an opportunity to study at the world famous Art Students League in New York. I have been a practicing artist for the past 20 years and it is in this capacity that I wish to testify before this Committee on the various proposals before it.

I am not here to officially represent all of the artists in the country. However, in my testimony I will attempt to give what I feel is the view of the greater majority of the visual artists.

For years it has been the aim of the United States government to keep ahead of the other modern day countries in social and economic areas. However, in doing so, we have become negligent in meeting the responsibilities of our cultural life. The United States would probably rank among the lowest countries in the world in its Federal activities to encourage and stimulate the arts of this country. Hundreds and maybe even thousands of young people who have great talent are being deterred from persuing a life in the arts because of the lack of recognition that this country has given its artists. As recently as the 19th of this month, the Associated Press Art Editor, Miles A. Smith, wrote a full page feature appearing in many papers noting the economic plight of artists in the United States. He said that despite the cultural boom that seems to be growing in this country, the artist still must struggle for his very existence.

I feel the ideas embodied in the three bills which are before this Committee would do much to alleviate the plight in which American artists sometimes find themselves. These bills are concerned with providing a means by

which the Federal government would display its interest in fostering cultural development. This interest is fundamental and I believe that the initial responsibility for encouraging cultural development and achievements must come from the leadership of this country.

Historians have for years always placed a high regard on a civilization or country who has displayed a large degree of cultural and artistic development. I feel that if action is not taken by the government to encourage the cultural aspects of our American way of life, history may record us as a nation with no appreciation of aesthetics.

In the spring of 1961, the Capitol Hill Community Council here in Washington sponsored an art exhibit, which I co-chaired with Mrs. Roswell Ward. She took the role of the Community Affairs Expert and I the role of the artist. We had no cooperation from the government, not because there was no interest but simply because there was no office through which our requests could go. Had there been a Federal Advisory Council, we quite possibly could have enlisted much more support and thereby broadened our show and made it more accessible to the public. Fortunately there was a limited amount of private financing which enabled us to prepare a book based on our experiences in organizing such an exhibit and explaining in detail the complexities of presenting an art exhibit. This book, although long overdue has now received recognition from the USIA and is being circulated throughout the world by their facilities.

Individual states are beginning to recognize the need to stimulate the arts and although this is growing, there is still lack in overall coordination. Recently, the Washington International Art Letter wrote all governors in the United States asking for their cooperation. Within

a week, 23 of these governors had answered personally and most of the rest of them had their appropriate agencies contact us. Thus we feel there is evidence that there is a need to coordinate efforts on the local, state and national level.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, I respectfully submit that your subcommittee and the Congress as a whole, has a responsibility to encourage young artists. You have a responsibility to see that the artists of today receive proper recognition and a responsibility to see that the United States government makes, as a part of its public policy, an effort to direct and coordinate and to stimulate cultural endeavors throughout this country.