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Reagan Advisers Debate Financing of the Arts

ARTS LOST CONGRESS FRIENDS

BY MARJORIE HUNTER

WASHINGTON, Nov 25 -- The debate over whether the National Endowment for the Arts should be abolished or reformed is a classic example of an issue that can affect the extent of future Federal generosity to the arts.

From the standpoint of the arts, it is almost ironic that the Endowment is being reduced to the point where it may become more of a political pawn in the hands of the new Congress, which will be sworn in at noon on Jan. 3.

The drama of the next three weeks will be to determine whether the Endowment will be reduced or eliminated, or restructured along the lines of the committee's recommendations.

Both committees have been meeting this week with officials of the Endowment.

They are scheduled to submit their reports Dec. 1, and final recommendations Dec. 22.

Conservative Blueprint

Until the recommendations are submitted to the President-elect, no one associated with the committee or the Endowment is speaking on public questions for the public record.

The substance of the debate will be whether the background of the committee's deliberations may be gleaned, however, on a report on the endowments just issued by the Heritage Foundation -- a conservative think tank based in Washington, as part of its so-called "blueprint" for a conservative America.

The chairman of the team that wrote the report was presidential adviser Richard J. Bissel, chairman of the Endowment.

Michael W. Buss, executive director of the John M. Olin Foundation, which prepared the report for the Heritage Foundation -- and several of its members who participated in the Washington arts conference held last week to present the Blueprint to Congress.

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"It is the task of the Endowment's staff to present the report." By MARJORIE HUNTER

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"The Endowment's staff, Dr. William J. Benne Jr., chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, has been highly critical of the agency's activities, and calls for "reorganizing the agency will be to emphasize political correctness and less categorical reversals of policy is seen as a "blueprint" for a conservative America.""

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