
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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**Chairwoman McCarthy Statement at Subcommittee Hearing on
“The National Endowment for the Humanities and the National
Endowment for the Arts: Overview of Programs and National
Impact”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), chairwoman of the House Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities, for a subcommittee hearing on “The National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts: Overview of Programs and National Impact.”*

As you all know, if you attend my hearings, I often speak of how much I like this subcommittee because we handle a lot of issues which directly impact people’s lives. The hearings we hold and give us the opportunity to improve people’s lives and the community in which they live. That’s why it seems so appropriate to me that the Subcommittee has the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts under our jurisdiction.

The arts and humanities directly impact the lives of each citizen in this nation and the arts and humanities have the potential to improve communities across this nation. During my time in Congress I have become increasingly familiar and impressed with the work of both the NEA and the NEH.

The history of these agencies is not without its questions or concerns. In the late 1980’s and early 1990’s the NEA, and with it NEH, suffered from controversy. In the mid-1990’s, perhaps in response to other grant controversies and other concerns, Congress cut the budgets of both agencies by approximately one third and reforms were enacted. Since the mid-1990’s the agencies have seen less controversy. This is, in part, due to the fact that the leadership of both agencies has led them forward. Sensible reforms have also been made.

There is no way that we could possibly explore all of the remarkable programs that both of these agencies are engaged in during the course of this hearing.

In recent years, the NEA has set a goal to have at least one grant recipient in every Congressional district in order to increase access to the arts for each citizen. The NEH has been working on the Digital Humanities Initiative which is aimed at fostering the growth of programs that incorporate digital technologies. As we are living in the digital age, the humanities and the arts are carrying us forward.

The endowments and their missions have evolved over time, and I am happy to help spread the word about these programs and their impact. Today we are going to hear from the heads of both agencies, as well as from grantees of each agency. We will hear about their experiences working with the two agencies.

Both the NEA and NEH are involved in more programs than would seem obvious to the casual observer. For example, I recently learned that the NEA was involved in the Mayors' Institute for City Design. This program connects mayors with architects and designers to tackle local challenges and help Mayors transform communities through good planning and design. Mayor William Glacken from the Village of Freeport, NY, in my district, attended this institute and we will hear from him today.

Research shows that experiences with the arts and humanities improve students' creative problem-solving and innovative thinking skills and can strengthen the mental agility in our older population. Experts say this sort of thinking process may help ward off mental diseases such as Alzheimer's. The arts and the humanities ground us, inspire us, and challenge us to grow and expand. Both are truly part of the human condition and have a major impact on people's lives, in our nation's communities and around the world.

I look forward to today's testimony.

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