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# Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (1979-1992): News Article 11

Mitchell Zuckoff

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# State Audit Is Critical Of R.I. Arts Council Discretion for Grants

By MITCHELL ZUCKOFF  
Associated Press Writer

PROVIDENCE (AP) — The Rhode Island Council on the Arts gave a grant to an organization that used the money illegally and funded groups not eligible for its aid, according to an audit released today.

The council should not have given \$1,566 to the Rhode Island Arts Advocacy Alliance because

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the money came from federal sources and was used for lobbying, a "clear violation of federal law," said the report by Auditor General Anthony Piccirilli.

The alliance said in its grant application that it would "attempt to persuade members of (Congress and the General Assembly) to enact legislation favorable to the arts cause or to repeal unfavorable legislation."

The fiscal 1984 report also criticized the council for giving \$15,000 to the Providence Opera Theatre, which the audit said was ineligible because it did not have an artistic director and a professional business manager in full-time positions.

Iona Dobbins, the council's executive director, defended the alliance grant and the council's overall fiscal practices.

Dobbins said the pool of money from which the grant was made also contained state money, and there are no restrictions on the use of state funds for lobbying.

She added that the alliance "had a long way to go before it could become a professional lobbying organization."

In addition, Dobbins criticized the audit report for focusing on one small grant in light of the large amount of aid the council hands out, and said the media only was interested because of the financial scandals at the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corp.

"The reporters are just trying to create sensationalism out of this," Dobbins said. "For the most part, the recommendations are just small hints for housekeeping."

The auditor general also said several recipients of money under the council's Artists-in-Education program violated regulations by using other federal grants to provide matching funds.

*27-37*