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Fred Richmond

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REMARKS BY
THE HONORABLE FRED RICHMOND
BEFORE THE
JOINT MEETING OF THE HOUSE
SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE
SENATE SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ARTS AND HUMANITIES

NOVEMBER 14, 1975

Chairman Pell, Chairman Brademas, Members of the two subcommittees, it is a privilege to be here this morning to speak in behalf of H.R. 7216 and S. 1800, which authorize the continued funding of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities through 1980.

It gives me great pride as an American to say that passage of this legislation will assure that there is music, dance and a true cultural celebration for our Bicentennial.

This is a particularly important time in our nation's history for the arts and humanities. As Lou Harris so aptly put it when he testified before the Select Subcommittee on Education in September, we have become a post industrial society able to use our technological skills and resources to provide a standard of convenience and comfort never before experienced in human history.

It is because we have achieved this ability to provide basic services in an industrial environment that we are now able to turn our efforts to the quality of this experience.

And I can think of no greater contribution to the quality of our national life during the next ten years than an affirmation

of our commitment to the arts and humanities.

Many persons do not realize that symphonies, ballet, theatre, opera, museums, educational institutions and libraries are not self-supporting.

It is my hope, as we move through this important decade, that we will be able to provide additional funds to the arts and humanities to enable them to function at an appropriate level.

This is why the National Endowments are so important.

I am particularly pleased to see that H.R. 7216 contains a provision to increase Federal aid to museums. As a trustee of the Brooklyn Museum, I am well aware of the importance of recognizing the unique contribution that museums make to our cultural heritage.

The American people must, I believe, be encouraged, privately and individually, to help contribute to the continued vitality of our arts and humanities. If the public only knew there may be \$20 or \$30 in costs behind the \$8.50 they see printed on their symphony box seat, I believe they would be willing to make a greater personal commitment.

For this reason I have introduced a bill, H.R. 8224, to increase public support for our creative heritage.

H.R. 8224 seeks to utilize federal income tax returns to permit taxpayers to contribute to the National Endowments. The bill provides space on the first page of your federal income tax form for contributions to the NEA and the NEH, which would be made

in addition to tax payments or in lieu of tax refunds, and of course would be tax deductible. This check-off is similar to that which appears on your tax form now for contributions to Presidential campaigns.

The funds raised by this check-off would be used for direct subsidies to organizations and community groups across the nation, and not for administrative costs of the National Endowments. Funding for the arts and humanities would continue to be apportioned equitably to the states, taking into account individual art forms and cultural differences.

Philanthropists, state arts councils, city governments and others would still contribute to the Arts and Humanities only now there would be a mechanism to make up the deficit which these contributors cannot cover. In a sense this bill is a free advertising campaign to solicit funds from 80.7 million taxpayers.

This bill would not use government money; it would complement what the members of your two subcommittees are able to provide.

Support among the general public for such a subsidy is widespread. The recent Harris poll called "Americans and the Arts" predicted that Arts check-off could produce more than one billion dollars. According to the survey, 64% of the adult public would be willing to pay an additional \$5 a year for support of the arts and cultural facilities; 47% would be willing to pay an additional \$25 a year; 36% would pay an additional \$50 a year.

The bill has received widespread support in the professional community: it has been endorsed by Beverly Sills, Theodore Bikel, Thomas Hoving, George Wein, Joseph Papp, Hal Davis, John Hightower,

Frederick O'Neill and others. These people share the belief that H.R. 8274 would help relieve the intense financial struggle of our arts and cultural institutions.

The bill has also received the supports of arts labor organizations, college presidents, and those in the field of higher education who understand what this influx of money in the form of grants and new programs could do to revitalize our ailing institutions of higher learning.

I am tremendously pleased that your two subcommittees are considering two bills that continue our Federal commitment to the arts and humanities, and provide for at least 4 more years of this vital contribution. It is my hope that eventually we will be able to have the benefit of additional public contributions in the form of tax check-offs. I believe the American people are ready and willing to make such a contribution. And I believe that your efforts here with H.R. 7216 and S. 1800 will help guide the way for the American people. For, in the end, it is up to each and every one of us to help keep alive the rich strain of creativity that is part of being an American.