1989

Obscenity: Andres Serrano Controversy (1989): Memorandum 02

John Hammer

The NHA National Humanities Alliance

21 June 1989

MEMORANDUM (by FAX)

COPY

TO: Mary Bain
FR: John Hammer

RE: Some thoughts on implications of legislation limiting or terminating the use of regrant mechanisms at the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Following up on our telephone conversation on the possibility that Mr. Yates will offer legislation restricting NEH regrants that would parallel the restrictions on the NEA's subcontracts unanimously agreed upon in the Subcommittee yesterday -- I have pulled together information you may find useful when thinking about the current regrant situation at NEH.

Regrants are an important component of NEH's overall activities supporting humanities research and programming. I estimate that regranting mechanisms are employed roughly as follows (based on current year's budget):

Regrants for scholarly fellowships	$3-4 million
Seminars	6-7 "
State Councils	25

An important difference between regrants at NEH and NEA is that at NEH the grants are for projects (this includes fellowships of NEH funds awarded through regrant organizations)

1. Regrants are not and have not been a problem for NEH. The organizations regranting NEH funds are as rigorous or even more rigorous in the processes followed for awarding grants.

2. Over the last year the National Council on the Humanities has been conducting a thorough review of regrants for scholarly activities. The review has reinforced the importance of the regrant mechanism to meeting NEH's goals as well as to underscore the effectiveness of the present safeguards build into the NEH regrant process.

3. Several of the Institutions regranting NEH funds such as the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) and Committee on Scholarly Communication with the Peoples Republic of China perform critically important roles in scholarly exchanges with the USSR, East Europe, and China that the NEH would find extremely difficult to handle as direct NEH fellowship programs. (It is also worth noting that a number of other federal agencies such as the Smithsonian, USIA, Department of State, and others use regrant mechanisms for the same reasons.) In addition to the expertise residing in the regranting institutions, they are also able to move swiftly in a way that the NEH can not -- an important factor in rapidly changing situations such as prevail in East Europe and China.

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