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From Washington Post 6/13/91

NEH's Last-Ditch Pitch for a Conservative

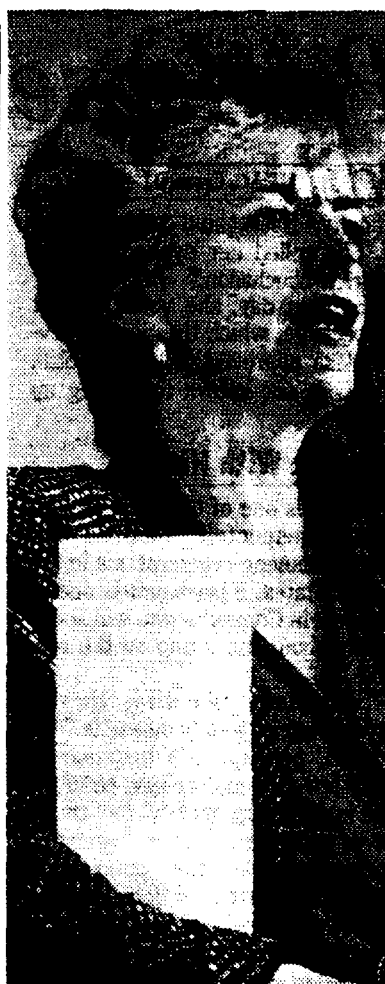
By Charles Trueheart
Washington Post Staff Writer

Lynne V. Cheney, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, is escorting embattled scholar Carol Iannone to the Senate today in search of the votes Iannone needs—and doesn't have—to win a seat on the endowment's advisory council.

Typically a routine presidential appointment to a virtually invisible panel, the nomination to the National Council on the Humanities has generated extraordinary opposition from such scholarly groups as the Modern Language Association and the American Council of Learned Societies. Iannone, a conservative critic and teacher who has written essays sharply critical of some black and feminist writers, has been stoutly defended by, among others, columnists George Will and William F. Buckley Jr. and scholars Donald Kagan and Gertrude Himmelfarb.

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee had scheduled a vote on Iannone's nomination for last Thursday. But after learning that committee

See NEH, D9, Col. 6



LYNNE V. CHENEY

Vote on Nominee Delayed

NEH, From D1

Democrats, and possibly even a Republican or two, were poised to defeat the nominee, Cheney prevailed upon Chairman Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) to strike the item from the agenda.

Having bought time to make a last-ditch case for Iannone, Cheney today will introduce the 43-year-old New York University associate professor to Kennedy and Rhode Island Democrat Claiborne Pell. Another round of "courtesy calls" on other

committee members is being scheduled for next week "to give senators an opportunity to meet Carol, to take a close look at her as a person and as a professional," according to the endowment's director of communication policy, Claire del Real.

As the author of the endowment's enabling legislation, Pell is an influential figure in any vote that concerns it—and Senate sources said yesterday that Pell is likely to vote no on the Iannone nomination. Most other committee Democrats, and some Republicans, are declaring themselves officially undecided, even if they were prepared to cast their votes last week.

A spokesman for Iowa Democrat Tom Harkin said the senator was leaning against the nomination because Iannone "appears to be professionally weak and ideologically strong—the reverse of what we should see on the National Council on the Humanities."

Del Real said "we feel very confident that the senators will listen to Carol with an open mind."

Scholarly groups opposed to Iannone's appointment have questioned her academic credentials rather than her ideological positions. But she gave her detractors fresh ammunition, and some senators cause for serious concern, with an essay published in the March Commentary. In "Literature by Quota," Iannone denigrated four recent literary awards to novels by African Americans as acts of "reparation" and "tribalism" rather than artistic achievement.

Iannone, who has declined interview requests, was to have been considered last week along with two new nominations to the humanities council, Harvard's Harvey Mansfield and SUNY/Albany's Michael Malbin. Though Mansfield and Malbin are politically conservative scholars, they have prompted no discernible opposition. Nonetheless, the vote on their nominations was postponed as well, at Cheney's request.

A committee source said yesterday that action on Iannone and the two others would probably come after the July 4 congressional recess.