

1990

## Reauthorization: S. 2724 (1990): Correspondence 08

Thomas A. Hartfield

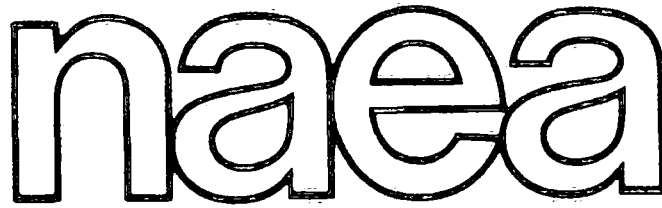
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March 28, 1990

The Honorable Claiborne Pell  
United States Senate  
Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Pell:

The National Art Education Association is concerned about the present art/public funding controversy the National Endowment for the Arts is engaged in, particularly about how this controversy could affect K-12 arts education in the long term.

More specifically, we are concerned about statements linking the controversy to public school art education. The implications are: (1) that if more people were educated in the arts, there would be no controversy, or, (2) that somehow professional art educators are at fault, and that if they had done their job, there would be no controversy. While both of these positions are ludicrous, the potential damage from such rhetoric is incredible to contemplate. There is equal possibility of damage to many of our art teachers who are struggling to contribute positively to the educational climate.

While NAEA does not endorse censorship, we believe the issue is primarily political and social, not artistic or educational. Testimony such as the enclosed, representing the Coalition for Education in the Arts, and similar statements made at the AAE Summit meeting last fall by the NEA Chairman, heighten our concerns about this linkage.

NAEA specifically asked this Coalition not to make such linkages in testimony because of the potential long-term damage to substantive arts education for American youth. Unfortunately, our warnings went unheeded. The more their linkage is made the more art education gets caught in the middle of an issue we are neither responsible for, nor can change.

We would ask that you convey to other committee members that such testimony does not reflect all of the members of the Coalition for Education in the Arts and that arts education is not an appropriate solution to this controversy.

Last, may we extend our best wishes that you and your committee may find suitable middle-ground legislation that will afford artistic expression and public accountability.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Hatfield", is written over the typed name.

Thomas A. Hatfield,  
Executive Director

Enclosure