

THE NEA'S POLITICAL
PRODUCTIONS

SPEECH OF

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 15, 2000

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks, the House has spent considerable time discussing the Fiscal Year 2001 appropriations bills, and I have joined my colleagues in debating the best uses of the American taxpayers' hard-earned money. As we evaluate the Department of the Interior Appropriations bill, I believe it is necessary to bring to light an egregious misuse of taxpayer dollars.

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson created a program intended to advance and promote artistic endeavors in this country called the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). On the surface, this seems a worthwhile cause. After all, who doesn't want to support ballet, theater, paintings and sculpture designed to enlighten and uplift audiences?

I am a strong supporter of the arts. In fact my office sponsors an art competition so students in my district can compete in the nationwide art competition sponsored by this House. I believe in supporting local artists to express their artistic talents. That is why I find it unfortunate NEA funding is often misused to support endeavors not intended to uplift and enlighten, but to advance ideas that are clearly obscene, anti-family and sacrilegious. This is more than unfortunate. It is unacceptable.

Just this past April, the Irondale Ensemble Project performed the play "The Pope and The Witch" at the Theater for New City in New York's East Village. This production was written by Dario Fo, an Italian satirist, communist and anti-Catholic activist. "The Pope and The Witch," portrays a paranoid pope addicted to heroin who is influenced by a witch dressed as a nun. As the play unfolds, various positions in the Catholic clergy are portrayed in an extremely sacrilegious manner including the portrayal of a drug-addicted pontiff promoting abortion and the legalization of drugs. In the play, he is gunned down by his own church. Fo's production maliciously describes the teachings of the Catholic Church and trivializes the role of its clergy, glorifying the use of narcotics. This production is offensive and a reprehensible use of hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Is this the type of "art" the NEA had in mind when it gave the Irondale Ensemble Project a \$15,000 grant and the Theater for the New City a \$12,000 grant? As the representative of Colorado's Fourth Congressional District, I cannot approve \$27,000 of taxpayer money being allocated to a political production which attacks Catholicism and promotes illegal drug use. This is a travesty and complete violation of the trust the American people have placed in the Congress to spend their money wisely.

Mr. Speaker, I support the amendment to reduce the NEA's funding offered by Mr. STEARNS of Florida. Mr. STEARNS amendment would shift a small amount—2 percent—of the NEA funds to wildland fire management. The NEA is funded at \$98 million. Private funds for the arts are in excess of \$ 10 billion. This is

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

\$10,098,000,000 for the arts. Mr. Speaker, just outside of my hometown of Ft. Collins, Colorado a massive wildfire is raging, destroying homes and wildlife habitat. This is only one of thousands of wildfires not just in the West, but the entire United States. Is 2 percent too much to ask for a serious threat which is affecting thousands of people? Is 2 percent too much to ask for when you contrast my plea with the highly offensive and political "productions" the taxpayers are involuntarily funding through the NEA? Clearly, such a small transfer is not too much to ask, and is the right and responsible action for Congress to take. How can anyone argue seriously for more funding for productions like "The Pope and The Witch" against fire management funds?

The Stearns amendment is a concerted effort to regain those federal dollars that were so egregiously misused. The amendment sends a clear message to the NEA: Congress will not support the use of taxpayer dollars to promote anti-Catholic hate speech or any other anti-religious bigotry. I am outraged, not only as a Catholic, but as a citizen of this country founded on principles of religious tolerance. The government of the United States has no place in financially endorsing the efforts of a communist playwright in his political mission of defaming a sacred institution which is embraced by millions of Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I am an ardent defender of free speech, and believe firmly in the right of free Americans to speak against any virtue, yet we must not confuse the right to "free speech" with the perversion of "subsidized speech." Mr. Fo's right to say what he will clearly does not entail a right to public funding. In fact the greater offense is to the conscientious Americans forced to subsidize Fo's bigotry at the hands of the NEA's despot administrators.

It is time the United States government remove itself from the dangerous practice of supporting anti-religious campaigns of any kind whether in the name of art. The amendment is a necessary step in doing just that.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. EVA M. CLAYTON

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 22, 2000

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, June 21, 2000, I was unavoidably detained and missed rollcall vote No. 298.

Had I been present, the following is how I would have voted: Rollcall No. 298 (H. Res. 528) "yea". "Providing for consideration of H.J. Res. 90; Withdrawing the Approval of the Congress from the Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization."

June 23, 2000

HINCHEY AMENDMENT

SPEECH OF

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 21, 2000

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Chairman, I strongly support the amendment offered by the gentleman from New York Mr. HINCHEY.

Congressman HINCHEY has been a tireless crusader for the rights of our nation's veterans, and this amendment highlights this fact by forcing the VA to abandon its flawed funding formula for providing for the health care needs of America's veterans.

Under the current system, VERA bases its resource allocation on sending more dollars to areas where there are more veterans—not where the needs are the greatest.

While that may sound rationale—the result has been horrendous for areas of the country like Queens and the Bronx, where I represent.

The facts bare out that increasingly more VA dollars are going to the South and Southwest portions of the country where more veterans live—veterans who are often younger and healthier. The result is less resources in the areas of the country, like New York City, where the veterans are older, sicker, and in more desperate need of care.

I held a recent veterans Town Hall meeting in my district at the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association office in Jackson Heights.

There, a constituent informed me of a VA hospital he saw while on vacation in Florida.

It was a state of the art facility, with plenty of doctors and nurses on call—and no patients.

They informed me that the place was virtually empty—but they have the best money can buy.

In New York City, meanwhile, we continue to see lay-offs of the professional doctors and nurses at our VA hospitals and clinics; long lines for care; and a far too high ratio of nurses per patient.

I am not saying that we should deprive our veterans in the South and Southwest part of the country their fair share of resources—all we ask for this amendment is that the VA provide equal treatment and resources to all veterans regardless of where they reside.

It is a shame that the VERA system has pitted veterans in one region of the country versus veterans in other regions.

Therefore, I am supportive of the Hinchey amendment to prohibit any federal funds from implementing or administering the VERA system.

I ask all of my colleagues from throughout the nation to support this amendment that has caused so much pain for so many veterans.

IN HONOR OF THE LATE ROBERT
TRENT JONES, SR.**HON. ANNA G. ESHOO**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 22, 2000

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the life of one of the legendary figures in the