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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

In the last decade there has been mounting interest and participation in the arts. This popular demand has led to dramatic growth in the number and quality of cultural institutions and activities throughout the country. With that has come more widespread financial support, which now includes all levels of government and various parts of the private sector -- most notably business, foundations, and individuals. Together, they are contributing more money and time to the arts at higher levels than ever before.

This pattern of decentralized, diverse, widely-shared responsibility fosters the vitality of the arts and affords them essential freedom. It has been established by men and women everywhere in the country who have come to appreciate, as I have, what the arts can mean in their individual lives and the lives of their communities. Accepting responsibility for this public interest, they have encouraged and shared with leadership and dollars in grassroots efforts to advance our cultural legacy, foster artistic creativity, and make the arts more readily available to all. We can take pride in this record, and we must work together to extend it.

In the past ten years the Federal Government has provided leadership and funding, serving as a catalyst in this American Renaissance. Today there are many federal and quasi-federal programs which can assist artists, dancers, photographers, craftsmen, architects, planners, art researchers, historic preservationists, museums, libraries, educational institutions, and other public and private organizations.

As House Minority Leader and as President, I strongly supported the development of the National Endowment for the Arts. My budget in 1976 included \$82 million in federal funds for the Endowment, and I have already requested \$87 million in federal funds for 1977. The funds designated for the Endowment provide a small but critical part of the country's total support for the Arts. Even more important, however, they stimulate support from others by providing grants that must be matched with other monies. In the past year, nearly 4,500 grants were made, reaching a great many local communities in every region of the country.

Today I take pleasure in announcing that I intend to seek full funding of the Cultural Challenge Grant program of the National Endowment for the Arts. This program would raise the level and broaden the base of ongoing financial support for the Arts from non-federal sources. I will request \$12 million for this program for FY 77, \$18 million for FY 78, and \$20 million for FY 79 -- a total of \$50 million over the three years. These federal funds must be matched at

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least 3 to 1 by non-federal funds for the arts. Thus, the Cultural Challenge Grant program holds out the prospect of \$200 million in new funds for cultural institutions over the three-year period.

This program will enhance the public and private sector partnership that now helps support the arts. The program is consistent with my position that the Federal Government should encourage but not completely subsidize the Arts. I fear that total subsidization might bring with it the attendant problems of control and censorship.

Over the years, my wife, Betty, has been an influence on me in many areas, including the arts. She has showed me not only the need for creativity in the arts, but also how the arts can enrich the lives of our children for the rest of their lives.

As a people, we have recognized that achievements in the arts are vital to us all. We must work together to ensure their future. The country's cultural institutions are critical to this pursuit, providing centers of excellence and inspiration for everyone, but especially for the individual artists of this and future generations, without whom there can be no art at all. Providing for the long-term stability of these institutions, enabling them to become even more vigorous, and extending their activities to an ever larger portion of our people is strongly in the public interest.

In America's third century, the arts can help us more than ever before to fulfill the humane values of our country's dedication -- extending the vision, enriching the minds, and raising the spirits of all Americans and all peoples everywhere.

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