THE TIME TO DEFUND THE NEA IS Now

January 4, 1995 *by: Phyllis Schlafly*

The resolve of the new Republican Majority in Congress to cut federal spending will be tested by the way they treat the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). It's a prime example of special-interest boondoggles, waste and corruption, and spending taxpayers' money on projects that are offensive to the majority of the American people.

If the NEA's next appropriation is earmarked for deletion, you can bet that the people with tremendous access to the media will go into action. People for the American Way will cry "censorship"! Fliers will be inserted into the programs handed to all playgoers and concertgoers telling them that Jesse Helms is "censoring" their entertainment, and that theater and music will disappear from America at the hands of Republican "barbarians."

Meanwhile, NEA chairman Jane Alexander can be expected to follow the example of the man who appointed her and put on a Clintonesque act that makes her sound like a born-again conservative. The Clinton Administration learned a hard lesson from the November election, and is now trying to schmooze the voters with one step backwards and a dose of conservative rhetoric.

Republicans will be fools if they believe this act. Ms. Alexander assured Senators during her confirmation that the NEA under her chairmanship would be more in tune with the American public when funding the arts. Words are cheap; her latest series of grants include the following pseudo-artists whose resumes should have disqualified them from receiving any grants of taxpayer funds.

Tim Miller, who used previous NEA grants to disrobe and sexually stimulate himself on stage (and among the audience) during his so-called "performance art" presentation entitled "My Queer Body."

Holly Hughes, whose previous awards of taxpayer funds were devoted to her writing and performing in such sewer "performances" as the "Well of Horniness."

Kitchen Theater, which had previously used taxpayers' money to pay Annie Sprinkle to invite the audience to examine the inside of her genitalia with a flashlight.

Frameline, which has used taxpayer funds to organize and run the pornographic offerings of the annual Gay and Lesbian Film Festival in San Francisco.

Marlon Riggs, who used taxpayer funds from both the NEA and Public Broadcasting to produce the pornographic, profanity-filled, and pro-homosexual documentary entitled "Tongues Untied," which even many PBS stations refused to air because of its content.

Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, where Karen Finley first came to national attention, and where Ron Athey sliced designs into the flesh of another man's back,

soaked up the blood with paper towels, and then tossed the blood-soaked towels over the heads of his audience. (News reports speculated that the blood might have been HIV positive.)

Franklin Furnace Archive in New York, where Karen Finley, Holly Hughes, Tim Miller and numerous others have been given yet another taxpayer-subsidized venue to shock the public with their so-called "performance art," details of which are too disgusting to recite in this column.

Highways Inc. in Santa Monica, another taxpayer-subsidized venue, where Tim Miller develops his homosexual "shock" material and serves on the board of directors.

Centro Cultural de la Raza, which was responsible for using NEA grants to give away tax dollars to illegal aliens on the U.S.-Mexican border last year.

Federal funding to the arts was a creation of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and, like most other LBJ spending projects, it has done more harm than good. The original do-good purpose of the National Endowment for the Arts was to extend enjoyment of the arts to large numbers of Americans through subsidies to such cultural places and events as museums and concerts.

When the NEA got into the business of making taxpayer grants to would-be "artists" who could not sell their wares in the marketplace and who refused to tell what they were going to do with the money until after they received it, the agency became hopelessly corrupt. Art became the "art" of the con artists, as they used the system called "peer review panels" to play the game of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours."

It's impossible to reform the incestuous relationship of those who vote for and receive NEA grants. But the grant recipients are not going to go quietly; they are actors, and they know how to play the victim and put on a good sob act.

The only way to stop NEA outrages is for Congress to totally delete NEA funding from the Department of the Interior appropriation. The American voters should hold Members of Congress personally and collectively responsible for everything the NEA does with taxpayer funds.