

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

In Final Budget, Clinton Tries Again for Big Boost for Cultural Endowments

BY PATRICK HEALY

DESPITE fervent Republican opposition, President Clinton is taking one last crack at scoring a big spending increase for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Mr. Clinton last week proposed giving \$150-million to each endowment in the 2001 fiscal year. The arts endowment, which now receives \$97.6-million, would get a 53.7-percent increase under the president's plan. The humanities endowment is receiving \$115.3-million this year, and is slated for a 30.1-percent increase.

The budget blueprint also includes \$308-million for the National Archives and Records Administration, the agency responsible for preserving historical documents and making them available to scholars. Most of that 34-percent increase would pay for repairs to archive facilities.

But by far the biggest leaps for scholarly activities in the arts and humanities would be within the endowments, if Congress agrees to the president's requests—a big if. Mr. Clinton tried last year to raise each endowment's budget to \$150-million, but Republican lawmakers balked. Congress last year approved small increases for each agency, but only after weeks of talks.

To some opponents of the endowments, federal spending on Washington-directed cultural programs is a form of waste; supporters of the agencies, however, note that much of the money flows to programs and

activities in communities. Many more federal lawmakers last year said they needed to hold the line on the endowments and many other domestic programs in order to meet budget caps that Congress and the White House set in 1997.

Those caps will continue in force this year, and the president's \$150-million hopes will probably fall under their weight. Still, endowments allies were hopeful.

"I would be cautiously optimistic based on the fact that we did get an increase for the current fiscal year," said Arnita A. Jones, executive director of the American Historical Association.

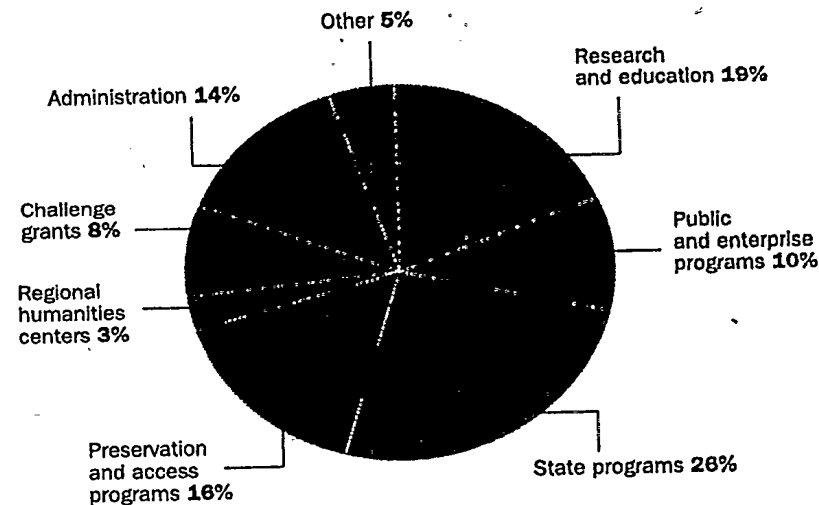
State-based cultural programs would benefit the most under the president's proposals for the humanities endowment. Funds for those state programs would rise by 31 percent, to \$38.8-million. Research and education spending would increase to \$28.4-million, from \$23.2-million. Public programs—which include grants for museums and libraries—would receive \$14.2-million, up from \$11.6-million.

HELP FOR RESEARCHERS AND COLLEGES

William R. Ferris, chairman of the N.E.H., said his agency would use the extra dollars to improve the quality of humanities education provided by colleges and schools, and to increase the number of research opportunities available to scholars.

The president and Mr. Ferris also plan to press Congress to approve \$4-million for humanities centers around the United

\$150-Million for the National Endowment for the Humanities



Note: Figures do not total 100 percent due to rounding.

SOURCE: CHRONICLE REPORTING
CHRONICLE CHART BY MARGARET ROSS

States. Lawmakers included \$797,000 in seed money for the 2000 fiscal year, and the N.E.H. is using private funds as well.

Lobbyists for humanities groups said they would urge lawmakers to agree to the \$150-million requests. They noted that last fall, several Senate Republicans spoke in favor of spending increases for the endowments, after years in which the agencies' budgets did not change much.

Scholars also hailed other parts of the president's budget, including:

- Higher spending on work done by the National Archives. The biggest shares of the increase would go to facility repairs

and to record services, which maintains and provides access to historical records, presidential papers, and other documents.

- Steady support for a \$6-million grants competition held by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

- More federal grants for museums and libraries. The budget for the Institute of Museum and Library Services included \$33-million for museum services—a 30-percent increase—and \$173-million for library services, a 4.9-percent increase.

- Support for the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, which would continue to get about \$7-million. ■