

TRUMP'S BID TO AX THE NEA

Catholic League president Bill Donohue discusses how President Trump's new budget affects the National Endowment for the Arts:

President Trump's new budget envisions the end of the National Endowment for the Arts. Its death is long overdue.

Under the Trump plan, the NEA would be phased out in 2019, providing \$29 million to cover the devolution process. The administration "does not consider NEA activities to be core Federal responsibilities." That is an understatement: federal funding of the arts is a patently unfair redistribution scheme—it takes from the poor and gives to the rich.

It is not low income people, or blue collar workers, who spend their time on weekends in galleries and museums—they certainly do not attend the opera—it is the rich who like such ventures. Let them pay for their own leisurely activities.

Just as important, the taxpayers, most of whom are Christian, should not have to pay for "artistic" fare that trashes their religion. To wit: "Jerry Springer: The Opera" is an obscene assault on Christian sensibilities that is currently being performed in New York at the Pershing Square Signature Center. The production company responsible for the play is the New Group; it receives funding from the NEA and is heavily dependent on public monies.

At a recent [press conference](#), where I was joined by Brent Bozell of the Media Research Council, Deal Hudson of the Christian Review, and Ralph Reed of the Faith and Freedom Coalition, we detailed the bigotry of the "Springer Opera" and called into question further federal funding of the NEA.

Knowing that the Congress failed to eliminate the NEA last year, we implored President Trump to appoint a new chairman,

one who would not insult Christians by giving money to grantees such as the New Group. The current chairman, Jane Chu, will be succeeded in June and Trump will soon name his nominee.

Robert Lynch, president and CEO of the Americans for the Arts, defends NEA funding by saying it is “a big win, economically and job-wise.” Chu says we need to consider “the NEA’s vital role in serving our nation’s communities.”

Neither Lynch nor Chu ever want to talk about the moral recklessness of NEA panels that give lavishly to entities such as the New Group; panel members obviously don’t bother to screen for plays that viciously mock Christianity. Those who say that the New Group did not get a grant for the “Springer Opera” are being disingenuous: money, being fungible, can be used to underwrite operating expenses and pay for other kinds of fare.

It is up to the Republicans to back their president. They acted poorly last summer when they actually increased funding for the NEA. That was before the dustup about the New Group and its hosting of the “Springer Opera.” There are no more excuses left to dodge their responsibilities.