

LPP 255 DISCUSSION QUESTION

Senator Jesse Helms, Republican from North Carolina, has proposed that the federal National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), stop providing any funding support for "indecent or pornographic art", and for any art works that "demean or ridicule" religion. His actions were in response to publicized incidents where NEA funding was used to stage a photo exhibition featuring homo-erotic photos of gay men and young boys, and where the NEA had supported an artist whose works included a crucifix inside a jar of urine.

In reaction to the Helms proposal, the NEA proposes to require that any applicant for NEA funding must agree that they will not use NEA funds to produce any indecent, obscene or pornographic work, or any work that would be offensive to any organized religious groups.

What, if any, constitutional problems are raised by the Helms proposal and the NEA requirement? Discuss, with appropriate references to cases and materials from the text or class discussion.