

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

KNOWLEDGE ★ REPRESENTATION ★ COMMUNITY

President's Report to NASAA Members

September 17, 2016
Grand Rapids, Michigan

In your business meeting materials, you received NASAA's **Action Plan Highlights** report on NASAA's accomplishments for the year. Every time I see this report, I'm amazed at—and proud of—what NASAA gets done.

2016 marked our first full year with Pam Breaux as CEO, and she's done a fantastic job! The board commends Pam for her leadership, her vision and all that she's achieved. We're looking forward to many more good years to come.

One of the reasons NASAA was first created was to provide **policy representation**. We've done good work on that front—securing a modest increase in support for the NEA [National Endowment for the Arts], affirming the importance of the 40% [of NEA program funds designated for state arts agencies] and ensuring that the arts are included in federal education legislation. You've all heard about those efforts.

But I want to call out another—less visible—side of NASAA's policy work. You know that common phrase, "You gotta be in the room to make a difference?" Well, **NASAA is "in the room" for us** on a daily basis.

- For example, this year NASAA averted federal legislation that would have required all state arts councils to install public art in post offices. If NASAA hadn't been "in the room" and taken fast action, we all would have been required to divert funds to that purpose.
- Another example is with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Pam worked with our member in South Carolina to make contact with top officials at USDA. She got herself on the agenda of their very next meeting. As a result, many of you have been introduced to these officials and can tap into new resources for the arts. All because NASAA was "in the room," working to open the door on your behalf.

Those are just two instances, but NASAA does this kind of thing every day. Every state has a part to play in advocacy and federal policy work, but we couldn't succeed without NASAA being there to guide our aim, to unify our message, and to stand up for the states.

NASAA is **on your team at the state level**, too. I've heard many of you tell stories about how NASAA got you out of a jam or gave you information you couldn't have gotten anywhere else. You sent more than 500 information requests to NASAA this year, and every single one got a personal, customized response. Nobody does

data better than NASAA, whether you're looking for information on budgets, grants or staffing.

NASAA also helps you think through **programmatic and policy issues**. This year, we offered guidance on arts and military programs and on diversity, equity and inclusion policies. And the sessions on this Assembly agenda were designed to help us stretch our thinking on topics like community trauma, advocacy and innovation. NASAA is finely attuned to our current state realities—but also is helping us look forward to new realities. It's a good mix.

We all belong to other associations, but NASAA is truly unique. **Only NASAA puts state arts agencies first**. Every member gets customized attention, and NASAA makes us smarter, more influential and helps us do our very best for the folks back home.

We all benefit, strategically and financially, from what NASAA does. And our active participation—as advocates, volunteers and dues investors—keeps NASAA strong on our behalf. The NASAA board and I thank you for your commitment. **Continuing unity** will be key to NASAA's ongoing success and influence.