

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

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Statement on Proposed Elimination of the National Endowment for the Arts March 16, 2017

On March 16, President Trump submitted his administration's first budget request to Congress. The proposal calls for elimination of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in federal fiscal year 2018.

This proposal is unacceptable to NASAA, to state arts agencies and to American taxpayers. Eliminating the NEA would hurt every state in our nation. It would undercut not only our cultural assets, but also our prosperity and our national pride. A truly great nation requires strong federal leadership that includes the arts.

It makes common sense to sustain a federal arts investment because:

- **Eliminating the NEA will not balance the federal budget.** The NEA receives a mere [0.004%](#) of the total federal budget, less than 1/2 of one hundredth of one percent. In fact, the arts make it *easier* to balance our country's books, returning [\\$22.3 billion](#) in tax revenue to federal, state, county and municipal governments.
- **The NEA's programs address top policy priorities** for lawmakers and citizens alike. The NEA is [healing our wounded warriors](#), [leading community revitalization efforts](#) and spurring a sector that contributes [\\$704 billion](#) to the U.S. economy, yielding a \$24 billion trade surplus.
- On top of the \$71 million in direct grants awarded by the NEA, 40% of the NEA's grant funds (\$47 million in FY2017) are allocated to [states and regions](#). This is an **exemplary state-federal partnership** through which federal funds address the needs and priorities of local communities and help to catalyze significant state investment in the arts ([\\$368 million](#) in FY2017).
- **Rural areas, low-income communities and schools would suffer disproportionately from reductions in government arts funding.** By using a combination of state and federal funds, state arts agencies award more than 25% of their grants to [rural](#) areas, 54% to [low-income](#) communities and 45% to [arts education](#) projects.
- Every NEA grant dollar [leverages more than \\$9](#) in **matching funds** and other contributions. Loss of federal leadership for the arts will have a chilling effect throughout the arts ecosystem.
- **A solely private funding model will leave too many communities behind.** Philanthropic giving as a whole in the United States is [geographically disproportional](#), with rural areas receiving only 5.5% of foundation grant

dollars. Public funding for the arts plays an essential role in making sure *all* American communities get their fair share.

This debate is not over—it is just beginning. The Trump administration's proposal is the first step in an extensive appropriations process involving both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Congress ultimately holds the constitutional authority to appropriate funds to federal agencies and will formulate its own budget plans for the NEA in the weeks ahead. The NEA has earned strong bipartisan support on Capitol Hill, and NASAA will be working in collaboration with many champions and allies to realize full funding of the arts for FY2018.

We are deeply disappointed by the President's proposal to eliminate the NEA. **We are just as deeply resolved to sustain the NEA and ensure that its important work continues.** And we are not alone. Across America, communities are voicing their conviction that government should fund the arts. This conviction is shared by Republicans and Democrats; by civic leaders who have seen their communities restored through the arts; by businesses who need innovative workers; by veterans who are using the arts to recover from battle wounds; by parents who want their children to succeed in school; and by hardworking taxpayers who know that the arts are essential to their community's well-being.

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