



## NASAA President and CEO Report to Members November 1, 2018

Pam Breaux

Good afternoon. Happy 50th anniversary, everyone! It's great to see you all here today. I say we're looking marvelous at 50, and I'm looking forward to celebrating our big milestone with everyone this evening.

At 50 years old, NASAA remains committed to a future in which every state and jurisdiction achieves its fullest potential in and through the arts. The public sector has a significant role to play in ensuring that all communities thrive through the arts, and state arts agencies embody that role each day. At NASAA, our mission is simple; we're here to strengthen state arts agencies; we're here to support you in your role—and our 50 years matter because we empower your work.

I've recently wondered which core ingredients position NASAA to do its best work for you. Which ingredients made the biggest difference during the last 50 years? Which ingredients need to remain as we embark upon the next 50? It wouldn't be difficult to take a really complicated approach to answering that question. But when I boil it down to what matters most, there are just two core ingredients that keep us valuable to you. First, **we listen to you**. Really listen. Second, our ongoing commitment to **effective action** is unwavering. You know, where I'm from, in south Louisiana, it takes only two ingredients to make the foundation for our most important dish: gumbo. It only takes flour and oil, but you have to invest the time, energy, effective action...and even listen to it sizzle to ensure the foundation's just what it needs to be to produce a great gumbo. That's not unlike NASAA.

When I say we listen to you, I must tell you that I've never worked anyplace that listens as intently as NASAA does. We listen to you all year long, and we take note and we refer to what you ask us and what you tell us frequently. Now, we're not recording you or taking names in the creepy way that might sound. To the contrary, we treasure hearing what's on your minds and we use that information (or as Kelly and Ryan would say, we mine that data) to serve you and your colleagues. There are many, many spreadsheets involved . . . but all for the greater good!

Here's just one example of how we listen. Executive directors and council chairs know that each year, NASAA goes to great lengths to interview them; it's a bit of a time-intensive interview that accomplishes a number of things, including a check-in on how you're doing and how NASAA can assist. This summer, almost 100 of those interviews happened; we heard from 54 states and jurisdictions in the process. The interviews produced massive spreadsheets of feedback from you. I want you to know that we honestly read it all! I read it. Our top team reads it. And we mine that information for ways to advance state arts agencies. Our Planning & Budget Committee, for example, sees summaries and uses your

articulated needs to determine what goes into our next action plan or our next strategic plan. The Nominating Committee uses your input to do its job. The Governance Committee does as well. It's an art and a science, but your feedback runs through our veins at NASAA and gives us the direction and good aim we need to best serve you.

A commitment to effective action is the other ingredient. NASAA's new action plan (actually, draft action plan until Saturday's vote) lists about 140 activities we'll engage in during 2019 to serve you. Every single activity, every single action is there because we believe they will collectively produce the outcomes you need most from us next year.

Based on your input, an environmental scan, and great work from committee and board volunteers, I'd like to give you a glimpse of what's rising to the top in 2019 for SAAs:

### **Politics and Policy**

Thirty-six gubernatorial elections are upon us. For a fuller picture we must add 6,070 state legislative races and 470 contested seats in Congress. When we do the math, this equals thousands of new relationships to cultivate across some difficult political terrain.

We know this means there are new relationships to develop, and we must all use our most compelling cases for public support of the arts. NASAA will definitely have you covered there! We're paying unprecedented attention to messaging, with the goal of improving our ability to effectively communicate across the entire political spectrum. Our tools for you have been refreshed in keeping with the current political environment, and we stand on call to assist you when the terrain gets tricky . . . or swampy. You should also know that we're doing long-range advocacy planning to engage in new strategies to move the needle forward for advancing federal support for the arts.

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

State arts agencies and NASAA are doing meaningful work to promote diversity, equity and inclusion, and we're committed to staying the course. We have expanded our portfolio to serve you. We have heard your voices and will continue to listen as we journey forward, with an emphasis on advancing equity in grant making. This is a top goal for us and for many of you, so we're amplifying our work with states and thought leaders to develop new tools and trainings and never forgetting to lead by example. This is a DNA change and a journey for us, and we'll continue to move forward.

I'm also pleased to report that our affinity group for state arts agency people of color is up and running well. About 50 folks of color have joined it, and they were incredibly helpful in helping us build our new mentorship program for people of color. Applications for the mentorship program have been coming in to the office, from prospective mentors and mentees. We're excited about the launch of this important pilot and appreciate your support of it.

### **Leadership Transitions**

We're seeing record levels of executive turnover among state arts agencies, and newly elected governors will soon be making appointments to boards and commissions. We'll welcome them all and orient the new leaders to public-sector service. We'll also equip them to succeed. I'd like to especially welcome to the room today new leaders within state arts agencies. If you haven't felt it yet, I hope you feel it now . . . we've got your backs! And we're so glad you're here.

## State Arts Agency Innovation

State arts agencies are finding fresh ways to serve the public, and they want and need increased thought leadership here. We hear you here, too. NASAA will help you innovate within the confines of state government. We're emphasizing cross-sector collaborations and more, as we and you move beyond the standard business and governmental models. When it comes to innovation, improvement and change, some of what we'll highlight for you in 2019 includes:

- current dedicated and supplemental revenue streams for state arts agencies because REVENUE's on your minds;
- strategies used in state government for attracting and retaining a young work force for the public sector;
- models for supporting arts activities that fall *outside* the traditional 501(c)(3) model;
- freedom of expression policies;
- and policies and practices that engage the public in citizen driven decision making. You're asking for these best practices, and we'll get them to you.

And now, for your viewing pleasure, I have a quick treat to share via video. One of our newer partnerships is with Ovation TV, where two NASAA PSAs are currently in rotation, helping to extend our messages to the 50 million homes that subscribe to Ovation. We worked with Ovation to adapt two of our new whiteboard animation videos for TV. Here are two 30-second spots:

[American Ingenuity](#)  
[Student Success](#)

We're proud to be a member of Ovation's Stand for the Arts Coalition.

I'm predicting 2019 will provide a robust and energetic start to our next 50 years at NASAA. Our action list may be 140 activities long, but your NASAA team is ready for it. We slay all day, every day, and we look forward to the new days ahead. Honestly, it's such a pleasure to work with our team of superheroes, would you please help me acknowledge them with some resounding love? [Applause]

Thanks to each of you for the work you advance each day on behalf of the people of our country. We're here to support that work; we'll keep listening and listening intently. And we'll continue to stay sharply focused on the effective action you need us to take on to have your backs.

Thanks for listening . . . and let's move on with the program!