



2019 NASAA Chair Report to Members

September 20, 2019

The last couple of days here in Rhode Island have been a fantastic example of the power of NASAA as a learning community. We've practiced actions we can take to advance equity in grant making. We've explored strategic partnerships that can expand our influence and widen our family of allies. We've looked at different dimensions of leadership: mindful leadership, inclusive leadership, and advocacy leadership. The camaraderie has been inspiring, too. I love the boost we get from talking with each other during sessions, over breakfast and waiting for the elevator!

It's been wonderful to be in New England, and Randy and his RISCA team have done us proud. So thank you, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, for your hospitality!

We have just a little NASAA business to complete before enjoying our closing artistic performances today. Chairs and executive directors received all business motions by e-mail, and they're also available on the conference website. First on the agenda is the annual Chairman's Report. Which is a pleasure to deliver, because NASAA's had an amazing year!

- Our research with the National Governors Association and the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA] is a game changer for the 60 million people living in rural America, and it's a great tool for demonstrating the relevance of the arts in public policy.
- NASAA has a growing presence on Capitol Hill. The rural prosperity briefing NASAA convened in May filled a room at the Capitol and reached another 17,000 people on-line.
- At a time when a lot of federal agencies are seeing cutbacks, the NEA's budget is growing, with NASAA's bipartisan advocacy. If you haven't reached out to your senators to urge their support for the NEA in FY2020, now is a great time to do so!
- NASAA's data is the best in the business. It gives us credibility to make a convincing case for public resources.
- Our partnerships with ArtPlace America and Aroha Philanthropies are creating new opportunities for state arts agencies.
- NASAA also is pushing the envelope on critical issues like DEI [diversity, equity and inclusion], creative aging, creative placemaking, the arts in health and the creative economy.

All this and so much more! If you haven't perused the latest [Action Plan Highlights](#) report, I encourage you to do so.

What you *won't* see in that report is everything NASAA does behind the scenes to help state arts agencies. My own agency has had more than its fair share of existential crises this year. And through them all, NASAA had our back—helping us find our way through the chaos and uncertainty.

We're going to hold elections shortly, making this the last time that I'll address the Assembly as your board chair. I can't let this moment pass without expressing what my time on the NASAA board has meant to me. My time on the NASAA board has deepened my understanding of how important state arts agencies are—not just in my own state, but in every state. It's called me to serve at a higher level, and it's given me tools that help me do a better job for my own council back home. Across our nation, the arts community has wildly diverging worldviews: we come from different cultural perspectives, different geographies and we occupy every conceivable point on the political spectrum. NASAA keeps us from being a hot mess. NASAA gives us common cause, a united voice and good aim. That's been a powerful model for me, and for many states.

Because of these experiences, I volunteer my time to serve NASAA and I make an annual personal contribution. I hope each of you does, too! Whatever the size, your individual contributions to NASAA are "golden" because they provide unrestricted support that can be used where it matters most. So thank you for your [gifts](#), and keep them coming!

All of the benefits that I've gotten from NASAA—and that you've experienced, too!—are made possible by an incredible staff team. They go above and beyond to help states and jurisdictions. Pam Breaux expertly captains the ship, and she has an able and talented crew. Pam and the staff, we salute you.

I'm proud to be part of this field and what we stand for. It has been an honor to serve as your chair. That concludes my chairman's report!

— Benjamin Brown, Chair, Alaska State Council on the Arts