

**Mary Anne Carter, Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts
Prepared Remarks*—NASAA 2019 Leadership Institute**

Thank you, Senator Reed. It's been a privilege to get to know Senator Reed over the past few months, especially during my last visit to Providence in May. We are so grateful to have an ally like Senator Reed in Congress, and I thank him for his advocacy, and for bringing his support for the arts to the national stage. I'd also like to thank Randy Rosenbaum and his team at the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts for hosting us here today, and for helping to organize such a great event. And finally, I want to thank Pam Breaux, NASAA board members, and the entire NASAA staff for inviting me to speak with you today and for giving us all this opportunity to connect.

What's so wonderful about this event is that I can look out at the audience and see not just colleagues, but men and women who have become dear friends, Pam and Randy included. I think it's indicative of the strength of our partnerships with the state arts agencies. The National Endowment for the Arts is stronger and more effective because of our work with NASAA and the state arts agencies, and this nation has a richer cultural landscape as a result. We were delighted to welcome new state arts agency executive directors into this network of support during NASAA's boot camp back in July—it was the start of what we hope will be many years of a wonderful working relationship with the seven new directors who attended. We are also so thrilled to have our Alaska delegation here with us today. Should future "events" like this come up—which I hope they won't—I hope everyone here will remember that we are here to answer questions and offer support as best we're able. Something to keep in mind.

In my travels as acting chairman and now as chairman, I've had the privilege of meeting with many of you in your own communities. It has been a true joy to meet with your constituents, and to see the results of the strong partnerships we share. I know these partnerships will remain strong under the leadership of Michael Orlove, who was named the agency's director of state, regional, and local partnerships, and international activities in February. We are so thrilled to have him in this new position. Michael spent years working with the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs before joining the Arts Endowment, so experienced the work of local arts agencies firsthand. Michael also worked closely with regional arts organizations in his previous role as the Arts Endowment's director of presenting and international. So Michael is extremely well-equipped to serve in this new position. He's been meeting with SAA executive directors over the last few months, and will host a session with our State & Regional Specialist Andi Mathis later this afternoon about their upcoming work with the states.

**These are prepared remarks and may differ from the version delivered on September 20, 2019.*

I want to talk with you this morning about my vision for the agency. One of my main priorities as chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts is accessibility. When I say accessibility, I mean both the ability of Americans to access the arts because of our work, but also their ability to access our agency.

We take the “National” in National Endowment for the Arts very seriously. The agency awards at least one grant in all 435 congressional districts every year, as well as Washington, DC, and the U.S. territories. Forty percent of NEA-supported activities take place in high-poverty neighborhoods. Thirty-six percent of NEA grants go to organizations that reach underserved populations such as veterans, people with disabilities, and people in institutions. Small and medium-sized organizations make up 65% of NEA direct grants. One-third of our direct grants go to small size organization, those with budgets of less than \$500,000, another third goes to medium sized organizations (budgets between \$500,000 and \$2 million), and the last third go to larger organizations.

I also want to make a special point about our investments in rural communities. Too often, too many people consider the arts—and this agency—to be disproportionately available in urban communities. But we know that the arts exist everywhere. In fact, folk and traditional arts in particular have an extremely strong presence in rural areas. The Arts Endowment is extremely committed to making sure the arts can be fully accessed in rural America. Roughly 14% of NEA projects are located in rural, non-metropolitan areas.—that’s about 300 grants worth nearly \$8 million every year. We reach additional rural communities through agency initiatives such as the Citizens’ Institute on Rural Design. In our latest expansion of Creative Forces, we are also bringing telehealth services to three new Veterans’ Affairs sites, in partnership with the central VA’s Office of Rural Health. This expansion is intended to reach veterans in remote and rural areas, and provide them with creative arts therapies designed to help them cope with and heal from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and other psychological health conditions. The three new Veterans’ Affairs sites will be selected by October.

Often, our grants and initiatives are the only arts support available. In many parts of the country, access to the arts would be non-existent if not for the National Endowment for the Arts. A review of the art giving of the top 1,000 private foundations shows that those private dollars don't reach 65% of American counties. In contrast, the National Endowment for the Arts is in 779 more counties than private foundations. Seven-hundred-seventy-nine counties—that’s 25 percent of America where the National Endowment for the Arts provides funding where the top 1,000 private foundations do not.

We reach thousands more communities every year through our partnerships with state arts agencies. As you well know, 40% of our grantmaking budget goes directly to state arts agencies and regional arts organizations. You are the ones who understand the unique needs and cultures of your communities best of all, so this support is designed to be flexible to accommodate the diversity of your constituencies. With your support, we also reach hundreds of thousands of youth every year through Poetry Out Loud. Since POL began, the program has reached four million high school students. More than 275,000 high school students participated

in POL, making it one of our most expansive programs. We've recently initiated new efforts to increase awareness of the program so that we can reach even more students across the country. As part of this effort, we've been in contact with all of you at state arts agencies, as well as state superintendents, the leadership of the Education Commission of the States, and classroom teachers, sharing with them the many reasons they should encourage schools, teachers, and students to participate in POL. We so appreciate your help as we try to expand this program, and make a difference in the lives of even more young people. So when we say that the arts are for all Americans, we really do mean *all* Americans. All Americans, all communities, all types of organizations.

We also want the American people to know that we are their arts agency. We might be headquartered in Washington, DC, but we are making a major effort to deconstruct any notion people might have that we're some isolated, out-of-touch piece of Washington bureaucracy. As part of this effort, we've begun holding at least one National Council on the Arts meeting a year outside of Washington. In 2018, we held our June Council meeting in Charleston, West Virginia. And this past June, we held our Council meeting in Detroit. Both of those meetings were made possible by our friends at state arts agencies. So I'd like to acknowledge Randall Reid Smith and Lance Schraeder from the West Virginia Division of Arts, Culture, and History, and Omari Rush and Alison Watson from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs for making those meetings happen. Other meetings have been held at offsite locations in Washington, DC, including the National Museum of Women in the Arts and Capitol Hill. Our next Council meeting will take place in October at the Phillips Collection in Washington. By bringing our National Council meetings to different venues, we are inviting the public to more fully participate in our grantmaking processes. At the same time, it allows our National Council members to see firsthand the impact of the grants they approve.

Arts Endowment staff are also traveling more frequently in field, conducting grants workshops and site visits, and generally making themselves more easily visible and more readily available. In fact, by November, our staff members will have traveled to all 50 states, meeting with arts communities across the country. So thanks to all of you for helping to coordinate these visits and to make our staff feel so welcome in your states.

As I begin my time as chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, I look forward to working with all of you over the years to ensure all Americans know they have a place in the arts. Thank you.

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