



Statement on Proposed Elimination of the National Endowment for the Arts

May 2, 2025

On May 2, 2025, The White House submitted its budget request to Congress for fiscal year 2026. It calls for elimination of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives have rejected past proposals to eliminate the federal cultural agencies. Congress has sustained funding for the NEA because the arts strengthen America:

- **The arts strengthen our economy.** The arts and creative industries [generate](#) a \$36.8 billion trade surplus and add \$1.2 trillion in value to the U.S. gross domestic product. The NEA and state arts agencies catalyze cultural production and grow the talent pool for this important American industry that creates 5.4 million jobs on American soil.
- **The arts help Main Street to thrive.** The arts are a boon to local merchants. Attendees at nonprofit arts events spend [more than \\$34 per outing beyond the cost of admission](#)—money that local restaurants and retailers rely on.
- **While many industries produce jobs and revenue, only the arts offer a [fivefold bottom line](#) that strengthens our nation.** Arts activity supported by the NEA and state arts agencies boosts economic productivity, improves education outcomes, fosters civic cohesion, facilitates good health, and preserves cherished traditions that tell our country's story. These are consensus values that all Americans want for their families and communities.

NASAA respectfully calls on Congress to sustain funding for the NEA. Every state and jurisdiction would see a positive impact:

- **The NEA supports community arts activities in all 435 U.S. congressional districts.** Through its 2,400+ direct grants and an additional 8,171 state and regional awards that regrant federal funds, the NEA achieves broad national reach—especially in rural and low-income areas.

- **Per a congressional directive, 40% of the NEA's grant funds go to states.** This exemplary [federal-state partnership](#) broadens the reach of federal funds and leverages additional state investments. The partnership yields more than 30,000 awards made by state arts agencies and regional arts organizations each year.
- **Relying exclusively on private funds will leave many communities behind.** A healthy arts sector needs *both* public and private investment. But not all communities have big foundations or wealthy donors, and rural areas receive a fraction of philanthropic dollars. Public funding for the arts plays an essential role in making sure *all* communities get access to the advantages the arts offer. Federal arts funds alone [reach 678 counties](#) that foundation dollars do not.

A federal arts investment is timely because the NEA helps Congress and the White House attain specific goals:

- **The NEA is efficient and accountable.** Since inauguration, the agency voluntarily streamlined its grant programs and downsized the agency workforce. It manages a high volume of grants competitively adjudicated on the basis of merit.
- **The NEA is playing an active role in the [America 250 celebration](#).** State arts agencies are an essential part of that initiative. 87% are planning to make grants, 96% are active promotional partners, and more than two-thirds serve on America 250 commissions or committees. Any disruption of federal support to state arts agencies will weaken national America 250 efforts.
- **The NEA provides a great bang for the buck.** Every NEA grant dollar [leverages more than \\$9](#) in matching funds and other contributions. This impressive return on investment is a great deal for taxpayers.

Defunding the NEA is a false economy that would weaken an important American industry and hurt every state and jurisdiction. Families would be affected when their children's arts programs close. Local businesses would suffer. We'd lose an important thread in the fabric of American communities, where the arts preserve our cherished traditions for future generations.

NASAA is deeply disappointed by this attempt to eliminate federal arts funding. We are just as deeply resolved to sustain the NEA. And we are not alone. Our conviction is shared by Republicans and Democrats and Independents; by civic leaders who have seen their communities restored through the arts; by businesses who need innovative workers; by veterans who draw strength from the arts to recover from battle wounds; by parents who want their children to flourish; and by hardworking taxpayers who know that the arts are essential to their community's well-being.

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