



## FEDERAL POLICY BRIEFING

Executive Directors Peer Group | January 22, 2025

*State arts agency and regional arts organization Executive Directors gathered to discuss emerging federal policy trends and to address questions that may arise from constituents. This document offers a recap of the key points shared during that session. While NASAA encourages you to use this document as a reference source to shape your own communications, it is not intended for distribution beyond Executive Directors.*

### THE FEDERAL LANDSCAPE

The 119<sup>th</sup> Congress has convened and faces a busy agenda. The deadline to enact the FY2025 budget is March 14, which leaves very little time for the White House to weigh in and for Congress to finalize expenditures for the remainder of the year. It's not clear how Congress will achieve that while also formulating a FY2026 budget, addressing the debt ceiling, and tackling other urgent policy priorities.

Immediately upon assuming office, President Trump issued [Executive Orders](#) designed to re-invent how the federal government works. Many of these actions focused on energy, immigration and trade or [rescinded policies of the previous administration](#). Among the rescinded orders was [Executive Order 14084](#)—Promoting the Arts, the Humanities, and Museum and Library Services. As a result, the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities is again disbanded. All federal agencies also will be affected by a new [hiring freeze](#), immediate reversal of [diversity policies](#), ending [remote work](#) and pausing new federal [rulemaking](#).

The White House has appointed Mary Anne Carter to be a Senior Advisor to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). She will provide policy and operational guidance while serving as an interim White House liaison. We applaud this appointment due to the agency knowledge and policy acumen that Mary Anne will bring to bear in this role. Other things NASAA will be monitoring closely:

- personnel transitions across the federal government
- nomination of a new NEA Chair

- how administration priorities will affect the federal cultural agencies (Will they play a role in the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nation's founding in 2026?)
- how administration priorities and executive orders may affect state arts agencies
- recommendations originating from the new [Department of Government Efficiency](#) (This body may serve as a "weather vane" to signal policy directions.)

As with any administration change, it may take a while for appointments to be made and for policy and budget objectives to become clear. While we're in this phase of "watchful waiting," it will be helpful for state arts agencies and advocates to:

- Be in touch with your Congressional delegation now, so that they get to know you as an accessible and trusted source of information. Congress will have to enact budgets on a compressed schedule. Lay a basic groundwork now so that you can follow up quickly if needed as the budget process unfolds.
- Share the impact that the NEA – and especially the [federal-state partnership](#) – has in your state.

Monitor NASAA's [Federal Updates page](#) for regular reports. Contact [Isaac Brown](#) for details or to discuss contacts with your state delegation.

## **NASAA'S ROLE**

Our best messengers with the White House and Congress are those who are perceived as credible on both sides of the political aisle. NASAA is uniquely qualified to work in that space—and we are doing so.

- NASAA is having strategic conversations with individuals in key positions in the new administration about how to sustain support for the NEA.
- The White House typically appoints a number of senior staff to the NEA as well as an agency Chair. As these appointments are made, we'll move swiftly to establish relationships and help them understand the importance and impact of state arts agencies.
- We're reaching out to key appropriators who shape the NEA budget. Our goal is to maintain strong bipartisan support for the NEA in both the House and Senate.
- We're offering messaging tips and conducting policy briefings for state arts agencies and state advocacy groups, too. If you'd like to request an advocacy consultation or briefing for yourself, for your council or for advocates, please contact [Kelly Barsdate](#).

NASAA's policy stance is always guided by our mission to strengthen state arts agencies. With the NEA, we emphasize how federal funds are intended to support state priorities and we advocate for state flexibility to deploy Partnership Agreement funds in

accordance with state plans and needs. With Congress, we focus on NEA appropriations, the federal-state partnership, and policies that offer comprehensive support for the sector and can garner bipartisan support. Be on the lookout for NASAA's 2025 federal policy plank, to be distributed soon.

## CORE MESSAGES

**The arts and innovation strengthen our nation.** The public sector ensures that the benefits of the arts accrue to every town and rural community in America—not just the biggest cities.

**Many sectors offer a sizable economic footprint, however only the arts sector delivers a fivefold return on investment:** boosting economic productivity, improving education outcomes, fostering civic cohesion, facilitating good health, and preserving our cherished heritage and traditions. No other industry delivers all of those benefits while also creating attractive communities where people want to live, work and raise their families.

Learn more: [The Arts and America's Bottom Line](#)

The arts belong to all of us. They strengthen American communities and families and have a strong track record of earning bipartisan support. **Federal and state investments in the arts have grown under Republican, Democratic and Independent leadership** and are valued by voters from the heartland to the mountains and the coasts.

Learn more: [The Arts as a Nonpartisan Issue](#)

A healthy arts sector needs three complementary kinds of funding: entrepreneurial earned income, philanthropic support and public investment. **Public dollars reach more communities than private funds do and ensure broad accessibility for all Americans.**

Learn more: Better Together: [Public + Private Arts Funding](#)

**The state-federal arts partnership is a model of good government.** It broadens the reach of federal funds, leverages additional investment, and ensures that investments respond to state goals and take local needs into account.

Learn More: [The Federal-State Partnership in the Arts](#)

## RESPONSES TO COMMON QUESTIONS

Constituents, council members and cultural advocates are naturally curious about what the new federal policy environment means for the arts. While nobody can predict the future, it may be reassuring to convey that:

- A period of uncertainty is common with administration changes. It's important to wait for reliable information and not over-interpret early rumors.
- Some strong arts supporters are in positions of influence in both the White House and Congress. They are actively working to protect the NEA.
- To date, the NEA has not been formally targeted. The NEA is not mentioned in the [Project 2025](#) platform, nor has it been named on lists of agencies that President Trump has said he intends to dismantle.
- We've handled proposals to reduce federal arts support before and certainly will do so again if needed. But we don't want to invite that kind of action.

When communicating with concerned constituents, help them to understand our overarching strategic goal: **we want to normalize and reinforce the idea of sustaining support for the arts**. So it may be helpful to de-escalate speculation and encourage constituents to focus on known facts.

### **Will the Trump administration eliminate the NEA?**

- No elimination proposal has been articulated at this time.
- Congress holds the ultimate authority to appropriate funds and has shown a strong bipartisan commitment to the arts. We want to build on that and help Congress remain confident about sustaining NEA funding.
- You can help by equipping your congressional delegation with information about the positive ways that the NEA and your state arts agency benefit your community.
- We have arts champions in influential positions in the House and the Senate. We need to maintain their trust and support their work. Stoking conflict, however, will make their jobs harder.

### **Shouldn't we be proactively organizing against possible threats?**

- We are! NASAA is working quietly and strategically with key appropriators to help them bolster support for the arts.
- On a federal level, the arts are not currently being used as a wedge issue or centered in the culture wars. Let's keep it that way.
- We cannot preserve arts resources if arts advocates are perceived as partisan. This should inform your policy agendas and advocacy alliances.

Please see separate communications from NASAA regarding OMB Directive M-25-13 to freeze federal funds.