

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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The Honorable Jeffrey A. Merkley
Chairman, Subcommittee on the Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on the
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

We write today to express our steadfast support for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). For more than 55 years, the NEA and NEH have put people to work and promoted educational and cultural experiences that generate tremendous economic returns for communities in every single state in the country. We urge your continued bipartisan support and efforts in recent years to increase appropriations. We respectfully request your support for funding of at least \$204 million, for each of the NEA and NEH for Fiscal Year 2023.

Since its creation in 1965, the NEH has funded groundbreaking scholarly research, preserved essential cultural and educational resources, cataloged more than 63 million pages of our nation's historic newspapers, and served every Congressional district and territory in the country by helping tens of millions of adults and young people grapple with the lessons of history. Annually, the state and jurisdictional humanities councils provide tens of thousands of free educational programs in urban, suburban, and rural communities. Also, established in 1965, the NEA supports art and education programs across the country. Access to the arts for all Americans is a core principle of the Endowment. The majority of NEA grants go to small- and medium-sized organizations, and a significant percentage of grants fund programs in high-poverty communities throughout the country.

Recently released data from NEA and the Bureau of Economic Analysis showed the devastating impact the pandemic has had on the arts and culture sector that makes up 4.2 percent of the national GDP. Between 2019 and 2020, the arts economy shrunk at nearly twice the rate as the economy as a whole. That is why robust investment in NEA and NEH must remain a priority.

Arts and humanities education are critical to prepare our students for the innovative thinking required in the 21st century workplace. Students with an enriched education that includes the arts have higher GPAs and standard test scores and lower drop-out rates. Every federal dollar spent on arts grants sparks collaborations that leverage more than nine non-federal dollars through additional support by private foundations, individuals, and other public sources.

As an example of the tremendous value NEA and NEH provide nationwide, both agencies offer healing programs for those who serve in our Armed Services and their families, as well as veterans reintegrating into civilian life. Through its Dialogues on the Experience of War

programs, the NEH brings together veterans and civilians to reflect on powerful literature and art. Across nine programs assessed from 2018-2020 by the National Humanities Alliance, 96 percent of respondents indicated that humanities materials helped them better understand their experiences. Seventy-nine percent of veteran respondents indicated that their program made them more likely to seek help if they need it. The NEA's Military Healing Arts Partnership provides art therapy for active-duty military patients and their families to improve communication, process traumatic events, and improve neurological and physical function. The Creative Forces program started at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center has now expanded to 11 other facilities across the country.

Thanks to your continued leadership, the NEA and NEH play a vital role in every state. We appreciate your attention to this matter, and we look forward to working with you on this and other important issues facing our nation.

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[[SIGNATURES]]

***Please reach back out to the Senate staffers you met with on Humanities Advocacy Day and request that they contact Moira Lenehan (Moira_Lenehan@reed.senate.gov) in Sen. Reed's office to sign on or for more information.

Please include the PDF copy of the letter, which I have attached to this email, in your follow-up.***