

March 11, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Capitol, S-128
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Capitol, S-128
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Capitol, S-128
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Mikulski, and Chairman Murkowski:

We write to express appreciation for your continued support of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and to urge you to support no less than President Obama's funding request of \$149.8 million. Federal support for the arts and humanities is a vital economic, educational, and cultural priority that impacts many communities across the United States.

For 50 years, the NEA has provided strategic leadership and investment in the arts and has proudly expanded arts activity across the nation with the mission "to bring arts to every American." Every dollar spent on federal arts initiatives leverages more than nine non-federal dollars enriching children and communities through access to the arts that they would otherwise not have.

Federal funding for the NEA acts as seed money that generates massive economic return. They are just marked their fiftieth anniversary and continue to reach over 20 million people attending live arts events in-person, impact 16,000 communities engage in NEA-supported projects, and generate more than \$600 million in matching support. The non-profit arts industry generates \$135.2 billion annually in economic activity and supports 4.13 million full-time jobs. The requested funding for FY17 for the NEA will help the endowment maintain its extremely successful programs, including *The Big Read*, *Our Town*, *Challenge America*, *Art Works*, and *Creativity Connects*.

Other partnerships that benefit from funding include Blue Star Families. NEA supports military families through several partnerships: Blue Star Museums offer free admission to active-duty military and their families, Blue Star Theatres offer free and discounted tickets to active-duty military and veterans and their families, along with access to educational programs and special events. Lastly, the NEA Military Healing Arts Partnership was recently expanded. This is a collaboration with the Department of Defense that supports music, writing, and visual arts therapy at military care facilities.

The NEH is the primary source of federal support for humanities research and related activities in the United States and commemorating fifty years of hard work. It provides support for professional development to scholars, educators, curators, librarians, historians, filmmakers, and more. Through the endowment's efforts, our national heritage is preserved, civic institutions are strengthened, and Americans are better prepared to address the challenges in a constantly changing world. In addition to

appropriated funding, the NEH is able to leverage significant, non-federal contributions through competitive grant awards, with direct matching totaling more than \$2 billion over the last few decades.

Federal funding for the NEH includes support for state humanities councils that work in partnership with the endowment to reach millions of Americans each year through teacher institutes, family literacy programs, and thousands of other efforts. With this extensive network of state humanities councils and general NEH programming, the endowment reaches every state and territory across the nation. NEH grants have supported thousands of projects, including *The Civil War*, the landmark documentary by Ken Burns viewed by 38 million Americans, The U.S. Newspaper Project, which catalogued and microfilmed 63 million pages of historic newspapers, and has supported more than 56,000 lectures, discussions, exhibitions and other educational programs each year.

FY17 funding supports the agency's special initiative – *The Common Good: The Humanities in the Public Square*, an agency-wide effort designed to demonstrate the crucial role humanities scholarship can play in our public life. It will include the continuation of *Standing Together*, the Endowment's special programming for veterans and active duty military. Other projects include the NEH Challenge Grants program which helps stimulate and match nonfederal donations in support of humanities institutions and organizations. State and territorial humanities councils will also receive funding to support their operations, projects, and programs.

Thanks to your leadership, the NEA and NEH continue to play a vital role in every state. We urge you to continue to support federal funding of the arts and humanities in FY17 with a funding level of no less than \$149.8 million for each of the endowments in the final appropriations legislation. We appreciate your attention to this vital funding, and look forward to working with you on this and the other important issues facing our nation.

Sincerely,

Tom Udall
United States Senator