May 3, 2011

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Capitol, S-128
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Capitol, S-128
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
SD-131
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
SH-125
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye, Vice Chair Cochran, Chairman Reed, and Ranking Member 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 Fiscal Year 2010 (FY10) level funding for both endowments in the 2012 Fiscal Year. As our nation grapples with economic uncertainty, federal support for the arts and humanities is an important tool for expanding cultural, educational, and economic opportunities in communities across the United States.

For over 40 years, the NEA has provided strategic leadership and investment in the arts and has proudly expanded the growth of arts activity in areas of the country that were previously underserved or not served at all. In FY10, the NEA directly awarded almost 2,400 grants reaching all 50 states, and state arts agencies partnered with the NEA to award 23,000 grants to 17,500 organizations, schools, and artists in nearly 5,000 communities across the United States. This seed money has resulted in massive economic return with the non-profit arts industry generating $166.2 billion annually in economic activity and supporting 5.7 million full-time jobs. Additionally, the federal government enjoys a direct return of $12.6 billion in income taxes, as well as the indirect benefit of improved education, community development, and increased business activity across the country.

The NEH is one of the largest and most important sources of support for professional development for many scholars, educators, curators, librarians, historians, and filmmakers. The endowment’s efforts preserve heritage, strengthen our civic institutions, and educate Americans to address the challenges in a constantly changing world. In FY10, the NEH made more than 1200 awards totaling $142.7 million, reaching every state and territory. The NEH is also able to leverage significant, non-federal contributions through competitive grant awards, with direct matching totaling more than $2 billion over the last few decades. NEH funding additionally supports state humanities councils who work in partnership with the endowment to reach
millions of Americans each year through teacher institutes, family literacy programs, and thousands of other programs. In 2010, these councils worked with 9,600 organizations in 5,700 communities nationwide, and were able to leverage $5.15 for every federal dollar awarded in grants.

Thanks to your leadership, the NEH and NEA each received $167.5 million in funding in FY10. We urge you to continue to support federal funding of the arts and humanities in FY12 through flat funding at these FY10 levels. Such support of the NEH and NEA bolsters economies and enriches lives. 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

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Benjamin Cardin
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Tim Johnson
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Carl Levin
United States Senator

Jeff Bingaman
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator