



March 13, 2007

520 EIGHTH AVENUE
3RD FLOOR, SUITE 302
NEW YORK, NY 10018

Dear Member of Congress:

Today, Arts Advocacy Day 2007, invites us all to ask what more we can do to ensure that every American is able not just to experience the arts as a spectator but to participate actively as a creator or performer. With 500,000 children and adults enrolled and 15,000 teaching artists employed, the National Guild's 350 member institutions are leaders in a community arts education field ten times that size. Our mission is to ensure broad access to quality arts education for all, in every quarter of our nation.

A glance at the federal ledger helps make the case for increased support of the arts. According to Americans for the Arts, the federal government spends about \$1.4 billion per year on direct cultural funding, about three-tenths of one percent of all discretionary spending. That's \$4.65 for each citizen. The National Endowment for the Arts operated with \$124 million in 2006, or 42 cents per American. Do these dollars disappear after they are spent? Hardly. The nonprofit arts industry generates \$134 billion annually in economic activity, supports nearly five million full-time equivalent jobs, and returns \$10.5 billion to the federal government in income taxes. That's a 750 percent return on the government's investment. If only all investments were so profitable!

Moreover, aside from the economic argument, who among us would deny the tangible impact of the arts on the quality of life in our communities? The National Guild can put you in touch with community arts educators from coast to coast, each of whom can testify to the unmistakable power of their work daily in the lives of their students, young and old.

America is a great nation because our government upholds the right of each individual to determine his or her own destiny. Arts education shapes that determination. Today research and experience both verify how the arts and arts education invigorate people individually and in groups; by participating we can become healthier, happier, more creative and constructive, and more likely to make smart choices. Customarily, government funding for the arts is looked upon as a philanthropic gesture, a token dealt out only after "serious business" is attended to. On the contrary, the National Guild believes and can demonstrate that the arts *are* serious business. When children and adults create art in their communities, the advantages extend to us all through an appreciation for our shared cultural life and in vibrant local and national economies.

We are proud to join Americans for the Arts as a National CoSponsor of Arts Advocacy Day 2007. We ask that you support a budget of \$176 million for the NEA this year, an amount that approaches previous peak funding for the agency in the early 1990s. Your vote will help preserve and promote American arts in all their variety and will inform the next generation that the 110th Congress knew what was worth fighting for.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Herman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jonathan Herman
Executive Director