

April 1, 2008

Engaging · Sustaining · Transforming

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of America's orchestras, and as a **National Co-Sponsor of Arts Advocacy Day**, the League of American Orchestras encourages you to strengthen federal support for the arts. Supported by a network of musicians, volunteers, administrators, and community leaders, America's adult, youth, and college orchestras total more than 1,800 and exist in every state and territory, in cities and rural areas alike. We request your support for policies and funding that will strengthen the arts in communities nationwide:

Improve international cultural relations by passing the Arts Require Timely Service Act, which will require U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to reduce the total visa processing times for artists to a maximum of 45 days. By inviting foreign musicians to perform, orchestras provide American audiences the opportunity to experience a diversity of musical talent and encourage a supportive climate for U.S. orchestras to perform abroad. We also urge Congress to increase funding for the State Department's Cultural Programs Division by \$10 million.

Promote creativity and access to the arts by approving \$176 million in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts. Grants awarded to orchestras by the NEA, and funds administered by state arts agencies, provide critical resources supporting music education for children and adults, expanding public access to performances, preserving great classical works, and fostering the creative endeavors of contemporary classical musicians, composers, and conductors.

Prepare students with 21st century skills by supporting \$53 million in FY09 appropriations for the Arts in Education programs at the U.S. Department of Education and strengthening support for arts education in the next Elementary and Secondary Education Act. As local partners in music education, orchestras collaborate with schools to strengthen arts education opportunities, helping to equip students with the skills, knowledge, and imaginative capacity needed to succeed.

Strengthen our nation's cultural heritage and stimulate private contributions to the arts by enabling individuals to roll over their IRAs to charity without penalty and permitting artists to take a fair-market deduction for contributions of their own art to museums, libraries, and archives. Tax deductible private contributions are a significant form of support that enables orchestras to serve their communities.

I encourage your support for policies and funding that strengthen the arts, orchestras, and the communities they serve.

Sincerely,



Henry Fogel
President & CEO