



April 13, 2010

Dear Member of Congress:

As the national service organization for the entire opera community and a national cosponsor of Arts Advocacy Day, OPERA America encourages you to support federal policy that will strengthen the arts in America.

Founded in 1970, OPERA America has an international membership that includes nearly 150 Professional Company Members, 300 Associate and Business Members, 2,000 Individual Members and over 16,000 subscribers to its electronic news service. OPERA America provides to its members: artistic services which help opera companies and artists improve the quality of productions and increase the creation and presentation of North American works; information, technical and administrative services which reflect the need for strengthened leadership among staff, trustees, and volunteers; and education, audience development, and community services which are designed to enhance all forms of opera appreciation.

On behalf of OPERA America's membership and those that it serves, we urge you to strengthen federal support for the arts in the following ways:

- Support artistic excellence by increasing funding for the National Endowment for the Arts to \$180 million;
- Enact legislation that will require U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to reduce the total processing time for O and P petitions filed by, or on behalf of, nonprofit arts-related organizations to a maximum of 45 days;
- Encourage international cultural exchange by increasing funding by \$10 million for the Cultural Programs Division of the State Department's Office of Citizen Exchanges;
- Improve student achievement by allocating \$53 million for the Arts in Education programs at the U.S. Department of Education;
- When reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), include the following provisions: Retain the arts in the definition of core academic subjects of learning, reauthorize the Arts in Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education, improve national data collection and research in arts education, and require states to annually report on student access to all core academic subjects;
- Promote charitable giving by enacting legislation to make permanent the IRA Charitable Rollover provision, allowing individuals to roll funds from their Individual Retirement Accounts to charity by lowering the qualifying age requirement and removing the \$100,000 cap.

We encourage you to support funding and policies that continue to strengthen opera and the performing arts in communities across the nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Scorca".

Marc Scorca
President and CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Fitterer".

Amy Fitterer
Director of Government Affairs