Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Vice Chairman Shelby, 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 again support a $155 million funding level for each of the endowments. Federal support for the arts and humanities is a vital economic, educational, and cultural priority that impacts communities large and small all across the United States, serving veterans, aiding businesses and redevelopment, enhancing student learning, and impacting our future. For almost 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 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. The non-profit arts industry generates over $135 billion annually in economic activity and supports 4.13 million full-time jobs. Additionally, the federal government enjoys a direct return of $9.59 billion in income taxes, as well as the indirect benefit of improved education, community development, and increased business activity across the country. Just last year, the American creative sector was also measured by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) through their "Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account" which calculated the arts and culture sector's contributions to U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) at 3.2 percent—or $504 billion—of current-dollar GDP in 2011.

The requested funding for FY15 for the NEA will help the endowment maintain its extremely successful programs, including The Big Read, Our Town, Challenge America, The Mayor’s Institute on City Design, Blue Star Museums, Shakespeare in American Communities, and the NEA/Walter Reed Healing Arts Partnership. In FY13, the NEA awarded over $112 million in appropriated funds through just over 2,100 grants reaching all 435 congressional districts. Few other federal investments have such a widespread impact and magnifying effect across the entire nation.

The NEH is the primary source of federal support for humanities research and related activities in the United States. 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.

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 FY15 with a $155 million funding level 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

Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator

Tim Johnson  
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

Brian Schatz  
United States Senator
Dick Durbin
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator