April 23, 2004

The Honorable Charles Taylor  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Taylor and Ranking Member Dicks:

We urge you to support the President’s request for an increase of $18 million to fund *American Masterpieces*, a major new initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts, and to cover increased grant making and administrative costs. We also ask for an additional $18 million to be devoted to the NEA’s core mission: creation, preservation and presentation of the arts in America. The additional funds would also expand the *Challenge America* initiative, which uses the arts to enhance America’s communities through grants for arts education, youth-at-risk, cultural preservation, community arts partnerships and improved access to the arts for all Americans. These requests would bring the NEA’s budget up to $157 million – less than the $170 million it received ten years ago, and less than what the arts community and the American public want and need, but still an affordable investment in the arts.

**The NEA is a good investment.** The nonprofit arts industry alone generates $134 billion annually in economic activity, supports 4.85 million full-time equivalent jobs and returns $10.5 billion to the federal government in income taxes. That’s an 8:1 return. Furthermore, federal funding for the arts is critical to leveraging private funding, and private support cannot replace the leadership role of government cultural funding, especially at a time when all forms of support for the arts are down while needs are greater than ever.

The NEA provides other important leadership functions. For example, its education program has helped to sustain support in local communities for arts education, which has been proven to help close the education achievement gap as well as to benefit children and adults in many important ways. It has helped coordinate policy on cultural tourism, which plays a critical role in community revitalization. It has also helped spread the benefit of the arts across the nation through its funding partnership with state arts agencies, which receive 40% of its appropriated program funds.

The proposed new initiative, *American Masterpieces*, will combine arts presentations with education programming, building on the *Shakespeare in American Communities* program, which is bringing professional productions to more than 100 communities in all 50 states, including U.S. military bases. Focusing on dance, visual arts, and music, *American Masterpieces* will present acknowledged masterpieces and make them available to communities across the nation.
During these critical times, Americans look to the arts for education, entertainment, and enlightenment. By approving this budget increase, you will strengthen the NEA’s ability to play its part for all Americans.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

[Signatures]
Tom Lantos
Jack Quinn
Pete Quigley
Danny K. Davis
Fred Casorso
Katherine Harris
Jim Moran
Don Young
Maxine Waters
Corinna Brown
Tim Holden
John Longworth
Nita Lowey
G. K. Butterfield
Sandra Lee
Max Farr
Ben Cardin
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Supporting Increased Funding for NEA

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5) Rep. Sherwood Boehlert  
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