March 22, 2010

The Honorable James P. Moran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson
Ranking Member
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Simpson:

We urge you to support a funding level of $180 million for the National Endowment for the Arts in the Fiscal Year 2011 Interior Appropriations bill to support the NEA’s core mission to bring the arts to every American. The NEA was funded at $176 million in 1992, and has never recovered from a 40 percent budget cut in FY 1996.

Thanks to your leadership, the NEA received $167.5 million in FY10 funding and $50 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This funding will help the NEA continue running its extremely successful programs, including Access to Artistic Excellence, Challenge America, Learning in the Arts and Federal/State Partnerships, which reach every congressional district in the country. In FY 2009, the NEA awarded over $110 million in appropriated funds through nearly 2,400 grants reaching all 435 congressional districts. In addition, $49.7 million in ARRA funds were distributed through 693 grants, reaching all 50 states supporting 1,408 jobs. Few other federal investments have such a widespread impact and magnifying effect across the entire nation.

The NEA contributes to the development and economic growth of communities nationwide. Each year, the arts industry generates $166.2 billion in economic activity, and provides 5.7 million full-time jobs. At the same time, this industry returns $12.6 billion to the federal government in income taxes. The National Governor’s Association and the United States Conference of Mayors recognize the enormous value of the arts in our communities and regional economies. Arts and culture-related industries provide direct economic benefits to states and communities: they create jobs, attract investments, generate tax revenues, and stimulate local economies through tourism and consumer purchases. These businesses employ 2.8 million people, representing 4.20 percent of all businesses and 2.04 percent of all employees, respectively. America’s arts and entertainment are also leading exports, with estimates of more than $30 billion annually in overseas sales. From the work of nonprofit arts agencies to the impact of cultural tourism, the creative sector is important to state economies all across the country.

The President’s FY11 budget proposal calls for a new $5 million initiative called, “Our Town” which would expand on the NEA’s economic development efforts and “develop arts districts; map cultural assets and development potential; promote the arts and artists as integral components of community life and essential to community planning; and support innovative approaches by communities to maximize the economic growth potential of their creative sectors.”
The NEA supports life-long learning in the arts. The NEA’s education programs have helped to sustain support in local communities for arts education, which has been proven to help close the education achievement gap and also benefit children and adults in many important ways throughout their lives. Students with an education rich in the arts have better grade point averages in core academic subjects, score better on standardized tests, and have lower drop-out rates than students without arts education.

We strongly urge you to increase NEA funding to $180 million in the FY 2011 Interior Appropriations bill. By approving this increase, you will strengthen the NEA’s ability to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to benefit from the arts. We appreciate your attention to this request, and hope we can count on your continued support.

Sincerely,

Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress

Todd Russell Platts
Member of Congress

John M. Spratt, Jr.
Member of Congress

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

James L. Oberstar
Member of Congress

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