April 30, 2010

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Capitol, S-128
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Capitol, S-128
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
SD-131
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
SH-125
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye, Vice Chair Cochran, Chairman Feinstein, and Ranking Member Alexander:

We write to express appreciation for your continued support for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and to urge you to support a funding level of $180 million for the NEA in the FY 2011 Interior Appropriations bill. Such federal support for the arts promotes creativity and expands cultural, educational, and economic opportunities in communities across the United States.

A $180 million budget for the NEA in the FY 2011 will strengthen the NEA’s already successful programs including Challenge America, Learning in the Arts, Federal/State Partnerships, and Access to Artistic Excellence. Such programs give students and citizens greater access to the arts, and help artists make greater contributions to their communities. For over 40 years, the NEA has provided strategic leadership and investment in the arts and has proudly expanded the growth of arts activity in areas of the country that were previously underserved or not served at all.

Thanks to your leadership, the NEA received $167.5 million in funding in FY10. In FY09, the NEA awarded over $110 million in appropriated funds through nearly 2,400 grants reaching all 50 states. In addition, $49.7 million in ARRA funds were distributed through 693 grants supporting 1,408 jobs. These investments directly contribute to the economic growth and development of local communities across the country. The nonprofit arts industry generates $166.2 billion annually in economic activity, supports 5.7 million full-time jobs, and returns $12.6 billion to the federal government in income taxes.

The work of the NEA enriches our lives, supports our educational systems, and bolsters our economy. We urge you to continue to support federal funding of the arts, and request that you increase funding for the NEA to $180 million in this year’s Interior Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your attention to our request. We look forward to working with you on this and the other important issues facing our nation.

Sincerely,

Tom Udall
United States Senator

Daniel Akaka
United States Senator
Mark Begich
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Ben Cardin
United States Senator

Christopher Dodd
United States Senator

Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator

Tim Johnson
United States Senator

John Kerry
United States Senator

Frank Lautenberg
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Carl Levin
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Jay Rockefeller
United States Senator

John D. Rockefeller IV
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Charles Schumer
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator