Dear Chairman Taylor and Ranking Member Dicks:

We urge you to support a budget of $136.3 million for the National Endowment for the Arts. This represents a $15 million increase over the FY 05 budget of $121.3 million and would go towards supporting the NEA’s mission to bring the arts to all Americans. An increase would ensure that the NEA can continue to support the creation, preservation and presentation of the arts in every corner of the country, as well as fund popular initiatives like Challenge America, American Masterpieces, Shakespeare in American Communities, Operation Homecoming, and Jazz Masters. Without an increase, the NEA will be unable to maintain existing programs, expand existing ones or undertake new initiatives without diminishing existing programs of great effectiveness.

Additional funds will allow the Agency to continue to serve the American people through innovative programs. Among the programs in 2005, Shakespeare in American Communities has brought professional theatre productions to more than 100 communities in all 50 states, including U.S. military bases; Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience, provides a unique literary experience for U.S. military personnel and their families; and Challenge America: Reaching Every Community, 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.

The NEA has never recovered from the 40% budget cut in FY 96 and its programs remain seriously underfunded. A budget of $136.3 million for the NEA is an affordable investment in the arts, although it represents less than the $170 million it received ten years ago and less than the American public want and need.
The NEA is a great investment in the economic growth of every community. The nonprofit arts industry alone generates $134 billion annually in economic activity, supports 4.8 million full-time equivalent jobs and returns $10.5 billion to the federal government in income taxes. That’s an 8:1 return.

In 2004, the NEA provided direct grants in 99% of all congressional districts. The NEA has 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.

Federal funding for the arts is critical to leveraging private funding. 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 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 close the education achievement gap as well as to benefit children and adults in many important ways. 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,

Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress

Christopher Shays
Member of Congress

Neil Abercrombie
Member of Congress

Thomas H. Allen
Member of Congress

Robert E. Andrews
Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress
Xavier Becerra  
Member of Congress

Howard L. Berman  
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Corrine Brown  
Member of Congress

Lois Capps  
Member of Congress

Benjamin L. Cardin  
Member of Congress

Ed Case  
Member of Congress

Shelley Berkley  
Member of Congress

Timothy H. Bishop  
Member of Congress

Sherwood Boehlert  
Member of Congress

Sherrod Brown  
Member of Congress

Michael E. Capuano  
Member of Congress

Russ Carnahan  
Member of Congress

Ben Chandler  
Member of Congress
Michael F. Doyle
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

Lane Evans
Member of Congress

Chaka Fattah
Member of Congress

Bob Filner
Member of Congress

Gene Green
Member of Congress

Jane Harman
Member of Congress

Rahm Emanuel
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Sam Farr
Member of Congress

Mike Ferguson
Member of Congress

Charles A. Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Katherine Harris
Member of Congress
Sue W. Kelly  
Member of Congress

Dale E. Kildee  
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin  
Member of Congress

Tom Lantos  
Member of Congress

John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

James A. Leach  
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

John Lewis  
Member of Congress

Frank A. LoBiondo  
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

Jim Matheson  
Member of Congress

Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress

Carolyn McCarthy  
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress
Jim McDermott
Member of Congress

Michael R. McNulty
Member of Congress

Kendrick B. Meek
Member of Congress

Robert Menendez
Member of Congress

Michael H. Michaud
Member of Congress

Juanita Millender-McDonald
Member of Congress

Dennis Moore
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

James P. Moran
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

James L. Oberstar
Member of Congress
Mayor R. Owens
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

Collin C. Peterson
Member of Congress

Jim Rastad
Member of Congress

Mike Ross
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Martin Olav Sabo
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne
Member of Congress

David E. Price
Member of Congress

Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress
Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress

Vic Snyder
Member of Congress

John M. Spratt, Jr.
Member of Congress

Bart Stupak
Member of Congress

Tom Udall
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

Diane E. Watson
Member of Congress

Rob Simms
Member of Congress

Hilda L. Solis
Member of Congress

Fortney Pete Stark
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters
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Melvin L. Watt
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