



## NEWS AND INFORMATION

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Americans for the Arts Announces National Citizens Membership Initiative**

*Creates Arts Action Fund As First Step In Involving The Public In Advocacy For The Arts And Arts Education*

WASHINGTON, D.C. —Americans for the Arts, the leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America, announced today that it is launching a major new initiative to involve individual citizens in advocacy for the arts and arts education. The announcement comes at the beginning of National Arts and Humanities Month, which runs throughout October.

The creation of the Americans for the Arts Action Fund adds a new dimension to arts advocacy in the United States by providing a vehicle through which any citizen can help ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to appreciate, value, and participate in the arts. Later this month, the Arts Action Fund will release a Congressional Report Card highlighting the voting records of Members of the U.S. House of Representatives on high-priority arts legislation. In November, a national citizens' membership campaign will be launched to encourage Americans to join and support the Arts Action Fund.

"In our work with arts organizations throughout the United States, we see enormous public enthusiasm for the arts and arts education that is not reflected in government decisions and school curricula," said Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts. "It is time that elected officials heard from the public when it comes to the arts and arts education. This new citizens' membership initiative will harness the power of individual citizens, joined together through the Arts Action Fund, and put it to work to ensure that the arts are a vital presence in every community and every public school in the nation."

Over the past two years, 40% of the funding for state arts councils has been eliminated; several states have practically eliminated arts funding; and the share of private giving has declined by over 40% in the last decade. In 1992, the arts received 8.4 percent of all charitable giving. By 2003, it had dropped to 5.4 percent. If the arts maintained their 8.4 percent share of total giving in 2003 (\$240.72 billion), they would have received \$20.22 billion instead of

\$13.11 billion—a \$7 billion difference. The Arts Action Fund is intended in part to help reverse that pattern.

The Arts Action Fund will initially focus on four primary areas of activity:

- Communicating with the Media and Candidates for Office—providing a leading voice on the importance and benefits of the arts to the media and candidates for office: hosting candidate forums, participating in town hall meetings, sponsoring advertisements, and helping shape candidates’ positions and party platforms impacting the arts;
- Advocacy Training at the State and Local Levels—involving Americans for the Arts’ extensive arts advocacy infrastructure and network at the state and local levels to help educate, train and connect individual arts advocates to local organizations;
- Evaluating Members of Congress—assessing and rating the voting records of Members of Congress on high-priority arts issues;
- Providing a Voice for the Public—aggressively petitioning to shape public policy at the federal level for the arts and arts education;

Americans for the Arts advocates for and represents thousands of arts organizations throughout the United States. While continuing that work as vigorously as ever, Americans for the Arts—a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and, therefore, limited in its political activity—has created the separate Americans for the Arts Action Fund as a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization free of those political restrictions to stretch our voice and numbers in support of the arts.

**Americans for the Arts** is the leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education in America. With offices in Washington, D.C. and New York City, it has a record of more than 50 years of service. Americans for the Arts is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. Additional information is available at [www.AmericansForTheArts.org](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org).

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