



NEWS AND INFORMATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

03/14/2007

Emblematic Hearing on the Arts Spotlights 2007 Arts Advocacy Day

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Americans for the Arts, in conjunction with the Congressional Arts Caucus and 93 national arts organizations from around the country, enlisted entertainment, arts, education, and policy leaders on Capitol Hill yesterday for Arts Advocacy Day 2007. A highlight of the day was the Congressional hearing on the importance of supporting the National Endowment for the Arts held by Representative Norm Dicks (D-WA), Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior. Witnesses, such as Wynton Marsalis, Chris Klein, Mayor David Cicilline of Providence, James Raisbeck, and Dr. Sheila C. Johnson, among others, encouraged investment in the arts as a way to help spur creativity and innovation in America.

It was the first time in more than 12 years that a member of Congress has called for a major hearing dedicated to the arts. More than 400 grassroots arts advocates, including Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts, took to the halls of Congress urging lawmakers to return funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to its high of \$176 million. The hearing also addressed the issues of Arts Advocacy Day.

The Arts Advocacy Day call to action included the following issues:

- **Promote Creativity and Public Access to the Arts Through Support for the NEA**

Advocates urged Congress to support a budget of \$176 million for the NEA in the FY 2008 Interior Appropriations bill to restore funding for the creation, preservation, and presentation of the arts in America through the NEA's core programs—*Access to Artistic Excellence*, *Challenge America: Reaching Every Community*, *Federal/State Partnerships*, and *Learning in the Arts*.

- **Encourage Lifelong Learning and Protect Our National Heritage by Supporting America's Museums**

Congress should support no less than the President's proposed increase to \$39.9 million for grants to museums within the Museum and Library Services budget in the FY 2008 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, which provides an increase of \$8 million for programs such as *Museums for America*, *Conservation Project Support*, and *21st Century Museum Professionals*.

- **Support America's Nonprofit Arts Organizations by Encouraging Charitable Gifts to Arts and Culture**

Advocates urged Congress to enact legislation to make the IRA Rollover provision permanent, allowing individuals to roll funds from their Individual Retirement Accounts to charity, and to remove the arbitrary \$100,000 cap. In addition, Congress was encouraged to co-sponsor S. 548, the artist fair-market value deduction bill, which allows artists, writers, and composers to take a fair-market value deduction for contributions of their own works to arts organizations.

- **Help Children Achieve in School, Work, and Life by Strengthening Arts Education in No Child Left Behind**

Ensure that all American students reap the benefits of a full, comprehensive education in the arts. As Congress begins reauthorizing the *No Child Left Behind Act*, it must provide support for state and local education agencies to ensure that arts education is fully implemented as a core academic subject. Congress is encouraged to include arts education in the hearings related to reauthorization of the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

- **Improve the Visa Process for Foreign Guest Artists at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services**

Advocates urged Congress to enact legislation that would reduce the total processing times for O and P petitions filed by, or on behalf of, nonprofit arts-related organizations to a maximum of 45 days. This time frame is eminently reasonable and consistent with security concerns. Most nonprofits cannot afford the \$1,000 Premium Processing Fee, leaving them to await the unpredictability of the regular visa processing.

In these meetings, advocates also provided Members of Congress with copies of the 2007 Congressional Arts Handbook, which includes information on important issues affecting the arts. The handbook is available online.

Arts Advocacy Day was officially kicked off at a Congressional Arts Breakfast on Capitol Hill, organized by Americans for the Arts in conjunction with the Congressional Arts Caucus. At the

breakfast, Americans for the Arts and the U.S. Conference of Mayors jointly presented the 2007 National Award for Congressional Arts Leadership to U.S. Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN).

Speakers at the breakfast included:

- **Mayor David Cicilline**, Providence, Rhode Island mayor
- **Rep. Norm Dicks** (D-WA)
- **Dana Gioia**, National Endowment for the Arts Chairman
- **Dr. Sheila C. Johnson**, Co-founder of BET television a nationally recognized arts philanthropist
- **Chris Klein**, Acclaimed Actor
- **Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu** (D-LA)
- **Robert L. Lynch**, Americans for the Arts, President and CEO
- **Wynton Marsalis**, Artistic Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center
- **Rep. Betty McCollum** (D-MN)
- **Jane Powell**, Legendary Artist
- **Rep. Louise Slaughter** and **Rep. Christopher Shays**, Co-chairs of the Congressional Arts Caucus

On the eve of Arts Advocacy Day, veteran broadcast journalist and Chairman of the Board of The MacDowell Colony, Robert MacNeil, delivered Americans for the Arts' 2007 Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy to a capacity crowd in the Concert Hall of The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. MacNeil's speech titled, "Out of the Disenlightenment," focused on creating a fertile environment for artists, artist residencies, and cultural diplomacy. Jane Alexander, actress and former chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, introduced MacNeil. Robert L. Lynch made opening remarks. The evening also featured performances by acclaimed MacDowell Colony Fellows Galway Kinnell, poet, and composer and pianist Anthony Davis.

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.

###