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July 22, 1994

Dear Senator,

I am writing to you once again in support of the National Endowment for the Arts. I urge you to vote for Senator Jefford’s amendment to restore the proposed cuts to the agency and urge you to oppose the negative amendments and punitive reductions to NEA programs.

The climate for discussing the appropriation for the NEA has been so negatively charged recently that any necessary Congressional objectivity and reasoning - so important for understanding the importance of the arts to our country’s past, present, and future - seem to be swept away in an avalanche of rhetoric and misinformation about the agency and the arts in America. Accordingly, the very real successes of the National Endowment for the Arts in every part of the country have been lost. The NEA’s support is important certainly for those of us in the arts community - artists, arts organizations, cultural institutions - but the major achievement of the Endowment has been on the effect it has had on the creative ideas being nurtured in the country and on the everyday life of the American public.

As the Executive Director of the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), one of the largest arts service organizations in the country, I join our Board of Trustees, staff, and many thousands of our constituents in celebrating the major achievement of the National Endowment for the Arts. Because NYFA itself responds to a diverse range of traditional to challenging artistic expressions from many thousands of artists and arts organizations, we are also aware - as the NEA is - of the vital role the arts play in providing arts and cultural opportunities for citizens of all ages - in schools, hospitals and senior centers, as well as in exhibition and performance spaces. NYFA provides thousands of services throughout New York, the United States, and even internationally. Without the support we have received from the NEA over our 23-year old history, our state and nation would be poorer, and we would not have been able to maintain the quality and reach of our services.

The National Endowment for the Arts represents two-hundredths of 1% of the annual national budget. Yet in financial terms it leverages billions of dollars for communities throughout the country. It is one of this country’s key economic engines; in difficult economic times, it is simply foolish to cut this support. But the Endowment and the arts in this country are much more than economic engines, they represent the importance of our country’s continuing investment in creative thinking and doing; they represent the very principles of free thought which are fundamental to everything America stands for in the world.

Your support for Senator Jefford’s amendment to restore NEA cuts is crucial. I urge you to speak in favor of the NEA from the floor during the debate and prevent the punitive restrictions from being imposed on the creativity of each and all of us.

I appreciate your thoughtful attention to this matter and look forward to your positive response.

Sincerely,

Theodore S. Berger
Executive Director