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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

MAY 1994

Association of Art Museum Directors
Dance/USA

American Symphony Orchestra League
Theatre Communications Group

Association of Performing Arts Presenters
OPERA America

NEA CHALLENGED TO SET PROGRAM AND FUNDING PRIORITIES

Jane Alexander, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, testified April 20 before the House Appropriations Interior Subcommittee chaired by Representative Sidney Yates (D-IL). Her testimony focused on the state of the NEA and its FY 1995 funding request.

Ms. Alexander reported on her progress in achieving her two goals for the NEA: improving the agency's image and bringing the "best art to the most people." With her town meetings and visits to 27 states, Ms. Alexander expressed satisfaction with her first steps toward "making America understand what the NEA has accomplished." She also emphasized her intention of increasing all Americans' accessibility to the arts.

A recurring theme of the hearing was the challenge the NEA faces in setting program and funding priorities, given the agency's flat budget. Specifically, how the agency will strike a balance between funding the artistic missions of arts organizations and supporting outreach activities, such as innovative educational programming. When Chairman Yates asked Ms. Alexander if she would take money from institutions to pay for new programming initiatives, she responded, "I am loathe to do that," and stressed the precarious financial situation faced by many arts institutions. Ms. Alexander emphasized institutions' continued need for support by noting the 16% decline of NEA funds in real dollars during the past decade, the \$47 million reduction in arts spending by the states since 1990, the 18% decline in corporate and foundation support since 1985, and already existing institutional deficits.

STATUS OF NEA REAUTHORIZATION

The Senate has yet to schedule debate on the two year extension of the NEA, NEH and IMS authorization, legislation establishing the goals and structure of the agencies. The House of Representatives passed this measure last year.

Meanwhile, the House Education and Labor's Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations, chaired by Representative Pat Williams (D-MT), will begin consideration of a longer term NEA reauthorization when Representatives Williams and Lynn Woolsey (D-CA), a subcommittee member, hold two field hearings in

the San Francisco area on Sunday, May 15. The first hearing will take place from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the city. The second is scheduled for 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Headlands Center for the Arts in Sausalito. We encourage all arts advocates in the area to attend. Please call the Alliance or your Service Organization for more information.

ART-21 STRESSES NATIONAL GOALS

The NEA's recent conference, "ART-21: Art Reaches into the 21st Century," was a great success, reinforcing Chairman Jane Alexander's message that "the arts are a vital thread in the fabric of society." The Alliance took part in

ADVOCACY MONTH ACTIVITIES

We thank all of you who participated in Arts Advocacy Month and urge all arts advocates to continue working with their Members of Congress. For those of you who initiated activities during this past month, please return to the Alliance or your Service Organization your response forms. Thank you.

this historic meeting of over 1,100 artists, advocates, administrators, and educators from across the country, the first ever sponsored by the national government.

Held in Chicago from April 14-16, the conference stressed the importance of the arts in meeting national goals and encouraged participants to envision the arts as part of the solution to the many problems plaguing America today.

The conference also explored how technological advances can serve the arts and how the arts can help improve technology. "Artists will play a big role for the arts are all about imagination, creativity, and perception," said Ms. Alexander.

Through the NEA's leadership, an agenda for the arts will begin to emerge which will have a profound impact on the future of the arts in the coming century. Closing her comments, Ms. Alexander said, "Our best artists and arts organizations reflect that American spirit — the mixture of discipline and improvisation, the combination of strong individual voices who collaborate, the bravado, the inventiveness, the dynamism of the American character. The arts are America."