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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 22, 1996

The Honorable Newt Gingrich
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

We are writing to urge the leadership's support for continued funding of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Last year Congress reduced NEA funding to \$99.5 million, a 39 percent reduction exceeding the cuts imposed upon many other agencies in government. As the Interior Subcommittee considers their FY 1997 funding allocations, we want to express our support for a minimum of \$99.5 million for the NEA.

This year's cut in funding already is affecting the arts as states are having to cut back education programs. Museums, orchestras, dance companies, opera and professional theaters also are scaling back community education and outreach programs for children and families. Further cuts could adversely affect many organizations in our districts which depend upon a combination of private and public funding to supplement earned income. Evidence has shown that income from ticket sales, memberships, etc. fails to cover the cost of all but the most commercial arts projects.

The thirty year federal investment made by the NEA has given many Americans the real opportunity to experience the art created in their own communities. The funding has made possible the placement of thousands of artists-in-residence in our public schools, children's festivals, literacy programs, grants to museums, galleries and orchestras, dance touring, folk and music festivals, mobile Shakespeare festivals and hundreds of other projects.

Rural areas, in particular, depend on NEA support since they do not receive large corporate and foundation contributions. For example, when nobody else was interested in supporting a gathering of western cowboy poets, the NEA did. Now, the annual gathering in Elko, Nevada, is a major event in the cultural life of the west, attended by thousands of people from all over the country. The NEA helped start the Utah Sundance Festival for independent filmmakers, and it continues to support the Fourth of July folk festival on the Mall in Washington, D.C.

The NIA has made efforts to prioritize its needs and substantially reduce its administrative costs through restructuring. They also are improving existing partnerships with states and local communities as well as exploring innovative ways of generating income for the arts.

Recognizing the continuing importance of the work that this small agency is doing, we stand ready to meet with you to discuss alternative funding mechanisms that will allow it to continue its work.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Paul Lyons
Henry Breckler
Stem CD
Mire Coste
Charles Spay
Ben Gilman

Marge Roukema
Immie Morella
Nancy Johnson
Ji Carter
Wayne T. Gilbert
Stephen Horn