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## Appropriations (1996): Report 07

Jane Marcus

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**Testimony in Support of FY97 Appropriations for the National Endowment for the Art  
Submitted by the Honorable Janet Marcus  
City Council Member, Tucson, Arizona  
for  
National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies  
to  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies  
Chairman Ralph Regula**

March 7, 1996

**Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee:**

Good afternoon and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today in support of FY'97 appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts.

As a member of Tucson's City Council since 1987, I am elected to represent my community on the same kinds of issues that you do, such as balancing the budget, economic growth, employment, city livability, crime prevention, quality of education for our youth, and family stability. In fact, these are the very same issues that rank among the top ten key concerns of our nation's civic leaders. Today, I would like to share with you some ways that Tucson and its local arts council have used the ARTS to help us address these broader civic issues.

Yes, the arts do help civic leaders address a community's economic, social and educational problems.

For example in the arena of economic growth and employment, I'd like to share with you our experience in Tucson. Last November, the Tucson/Pima Arts Council released the findings of an economic impact study entitled *How Tucson Profits from Museums & Cultural Organizations*. I have brought copies of the study for the Subcommittee's review.) This study revealed that it only took about 60 of our nonprofit museum and cultural groups to contribute \$200 million annually to Tucson's local economy. The study further documented that these 60 cultural groups cumulatively employ 3,545 full and part-time people, paying them more than \$16 million in annual salaries. Mr. Chairman, this study reveals that the nonprofit arts community in Tucson represents one of the city's top ten employers.

In fact, the arts in Tucson are viewed by business leaders as assets to attracting business development. According to Tucson's Chairman of the Greater Economic Council, "a thriving arts community is a critical tool in luring new businesses...because the Hughes Missile Companies and the Microsoft's of the world want to move to cities where their employees will be satisfied." In fact, before Microsoft decided to even open a technical support center in Tucson, employing 1,200 people, the company insisted on information about local arts activities before committing to our city. Tucson regularly competes with cities like Albuquerque and Colorado Springs to attract new business and I must say that the arts and culture are key selling points used by each of these cities. The Tucson Greater Economic Council and Convention Bureau actually use a 9 minute video that showcases the arts in order to recruit new business.

The arts are also a key factor in helping us reduce crime. The arts contribute to re-directing our youth away from criminal behavior and toward positive goals that improve their overall education and that benefit the community as a whole. I'd like to tell you about the great rewards of Tucson's summer **Art Works** program, but first I'd like to thank you for helping to pay for it since funding was made possible through a multi-tier public partnership of NEA federal funding, Arizona state funding, Pima county funding, and Tucson city funding.

Art Works is a summer youth employment program in the arts that incorporates basic curriculum skills, such as math and science, with training in arts skills. Last summer the Tucson/Pima Arts Council hired and trained 156 youth between the ages of 11 and 21 to complete 14 community enhancement projects, ranging from painting a mural on the Water Department building and cleaning up graffiti at the Martin Luther King Housing Development in order to construct a three-story high ceramic mural to creating a mosaic mural along a pedestrian overpass. These programs do not just teach arts skills to youth, they also teach practical math, science and communication skills so that they can learn how to properly construct these large-scale projects.

These youth are creating beautiful murals that are accessible to the entire community. However, I believe the longterm impact of these programs on the youth, themselves, is much more meaningful to the community as a whole. These young people, who represent our future leaders, are being taught to become goal-oriented individuals, responsible workers, analytical thinkers, creative problem solvers, team players, and most importantly good citizens. The pride that these young people have in what they've accomplished is extraordinary.

As proud as I am of the work our local arts council does in Tucson, our story is not unique. I think every city and rural town in this country is proud and aware of the value of the arts in their community. According to the National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies (NALAA), local governments appropriate cumulatively \$650 million annually to their local arts councils for cultural programming and re-granting. This is astonishing nationally, considering that there was virtually no local government support for the arts just 30 years ago. And while I would like to think that all of this local support flows simply because it makes good sense, I know that in many cases it is because you, our federal partners, have provided the model programs, the leverage money, or the start-up costs through the National Endowment for the Arts. **Simply put, federal dollars leverage local dollars.**

In terms of the economic impact of the nonprofit arts sector at the national level, the results are very impressive here as well. According to NALAA's *Jobs, the Arts and the Economy* study, the nonprofit arts sector alone contributes \$36.8 billion to the national economy, supporting 1.3 million jobs (or 1.4% of the American work force) and it returns \$3.4 billion to the federal government in tax revenues. **That \$3.4 billion is a 34 to 1 return to the federal government's \$99.5 million invested in the NEA.**

The Tucson story that I shared with you earlier about our summer Art Works program is also part of a much larger story that is happening in every community in this country. The arts are being incorporated into thousands of community outreach and revitalization efforts nationwide. I've brought with me several copies of a publication entitled, *Building America's Communities: A Compendium of Arts and Community Development Programs*. This publication will give you a very good idea of the extent to which the arts are being used as change agents for economic and social improvement in our communities.

These examples all lead me to one point, **the arts are a good public investment**. However, I am very concerned that the federal government is backing off too far from its commitment to this public good. The cultural funding infrastructure in this country is very interwoven and we operate on a delicate balance in sharing responsibility for public funding of the arts at the federal, state and local government levels. Last year's 40% cut to the NEA was simply too drastic and too sudden. Neither state nor local government can absorb this kind of disproportionate cut.

When I compare the city of Tucson's \$612,000 public investment in the arts to the return that we get back through cultural boosts in our economy, attraction of new businesses and tourists, reduction in crime, creation of and training for jobs, educational improvement of our children, and enhancement of the livability of our city, I would hesitate to put the arts on the chopping block. I think their value to a community is enormous.

As a local elected official, I appreciate the budget challenges that you face, but I do want to emphasize the importance of the federal and local partnership in the arts. In fact, I would like to urge this subcommittee to modify three areas of the NEA's legislation that has a negative impact on local governments.

1. **Re-granting Exemption:** As a result of the FY '96 Interior Appropriations bill and conference report last year, local arts agencies are no longer considered part of the NEA's Public Partnership program because Congress only allowed state and regional organizations to re-grant federal dollars. I believe that this is a very large oversight to not allow local governments and their local arts agencies to responsibly re-grant federal dollars. Local arts agencies, representing the interests of local governments, are an integral component to the cultural funding infrastructure of this nation. The federal government should provide incentives for local governments to match federal and state grants by expanding the NEA partnership program.

2. **Underserved Category for Rural and Inner-City Areas:** Currently, these set-aside funds are only accessible to States despite the fact that the objective is to make the arts more accessible in rural and inner city areas. I believe that local governments and their local arts agencies, who represent community interests, should also be able to compete in this category along with their state arts agency partners. This will ensure that all communities representing rural and inner-city areas have an opportunity to provide full access to the arts for its citizens.
  
3. **Local Arts Agencies Program:** In order to ensure that federal funding for the arts serves the cultural needs of communities throughout this country, I urge you to maintain direct funding for the NEA's Local Arts Agencies Program, which was eliminated to a shadow of itself as a result of last year's devastating cuts and restructuring. Local arts agencies promote artistic excellence, equalize and improve access to the arts, raise additional local government and private funding resources for the arts, and, perhaps most importantly, help promote community development, economic and job growth, and education for children through the arts.

In summary, I urge this subcommittee and the Congress as a whole to recognize the full value of the arts in our national, state, and community life. I urge you to take corrective action to remedy last year's disproportionate cuts to the NEA and the restructuring changes that negatively impacted local governments and their local arts agencies.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before your committee.

**Attachments: "How Tucson Profits from Museums & Cultural Organizations;" news clips;  
"Building America's Communities: A Compendium of Arts and Community  
Development Programs."**