



American Guild of Organists

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND THE AMERICAN ORGANIST MAGAZINE
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April 1, 2008

Dear Member of Congress:

We extend greetings on behalf of the National Council of the American Guild of Organists, AGO National Headquarters staff and THE AMERICAN ORGANIST Magazine, and approximately 19,000 members of the Guild throughout the United States and abroad. The AGO is proud to be a national cosponsor of Arts Advocacy Day.

Founded in 1896 as both an educational and service organization, the American Guild of Organists sets and maintains high musical standards and promotes the understanding and appreciation of all aspects of organ and choral music. The AGO is the largest organization in the world dedicated to organ and choral music.

We believe that the arts are an integral part of American culture and a benefit to our society. They also contribute to a healthy economic climate. Increased funding for the arts will benefit American communities and enrich the lives of all Americans. For three consecutive years, the AGO has benefitted from NEA grants supporting the creation and performance of new music.

As you consider the proposed 2009 Federal budget, please know that the AGO supports:

- Increased funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting;
- Reinstatement of the IRA Rollover, which allows people to make contributions directly from an IRA account to a charity without first withdrawing funds as taxable income.
- Increased funding for Arts in Education, as research has proven that arts instruction improves the cognitive learning abilities of children;
- Improvements in cultural exchange that will streamline visas for visiting artists, and increased funding for cultural exchange programs through the Department of State;
- Artist Deduction bill, allowing artists to claim a tax deduction for the fair market value of certain gifts of their own work to charity;

We believe these issues are vital to preserving and promoting American culture through the arts. We thank you in advance for your support of this agenda, and for your continued support of the Arts that make America strong.

Sincerely yours,

Frederick Swann
President

James Thomashower
Executive Director

F. Anthony Thurman
Director of Development
and Communications