



April 1, 2008

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of Theatre Communications Group – the national service organization for the American theatre – and the 466 not-for-profit theatres across the country that comprise our membership, we urge you to support increased appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts to \$176 million, for arts education programs at the U.S. Department of Education to \$53 million, for enlightened tax policies benefiting the arts and to enact legislation that will reduce processing times for O and P visa petitions filed by nonprofit arts-related organizations to a maximum of 45 days. All not-for-profit professional theatres in the U.S. that filed IRS Form 990, including many of our member theatres, present performances to a combined annual attendance of more than 30 million people.

Our country's not-for-profit theatres develop innovative educational activities and outreach programs, providing millions of young people, including "at-risk" youth, with important skills for the future by expanding their creativity and developing problem-solving, reasoning and communication abilities and by preparing today's students to become tomorrow's citizens. Our theatres present new works and serve as catalysts for economic growth in their local communities. These theatres also nurture – and provide artistic homes for the development of – the current generation of acclaimed writers, actors, directors and designers working on Broadway and in the film and television industries. At the same time, NEA-funded theatres have become increasingly responsive to their communities, producing work that reflects and celebrates the strength of our nation's diversity for audiences of more than 30 million Americans each year.

Indeed, the entire not-for-profit arts industry stimulates the economy, creates jobs and attracts tourism dollars. The not-for-profit arts generate \$166.2 billion annually in economic activity, support 5.7 million jobs and return \$12.6 billion in federal income taxes. Art museums, exhibits and festivals combine with performances of theatre, dance, opera and music to draw tourists and their consumer dollars to communities nationwide. Federal funding of the arts creates a significant return, generating many more dollars in matching funds for each federal dollar awarded, and is clearly an investment in the economic health of America. In a difficult economy where corporate donations and foundation grants are diminished, and increased ticket prices would undermine efforts to broaden and diversify audiences, these federal funds simply cannot be replaced. Maintaining the strength of the not-for-profit sector, along with the commercial sector, is vital to the economic health of our nation.

Theatre Communications Group, as a National Co-Sponsor of Arts Advocacy Day 2008, urges you to support increased funding for FY09 for the NEA, so that not-for-profit professional arts organizations can continue to educate and entertain audiences, train the next generation of artists, and generate local revenue nationwide.

Sincerely,

Teresa Eyring
Executive Director

Laurie Baskin
Director of Government & Education
Programs