



March 31, 2009

Dear Member of Congress:

As the national service organization for the entire opera community and a national cosponsor of Arts Advocacy Day, OPERA America encourages you to support federal policy that will strengthen the arts in America.

Founded in 1970, OPERA America's worldwide membership network includes nearly 200 Company Members, 300 Associate and Business Members, 2,000 Individual Members and more than 18,000 subscribers who receive a variety of free and fee based services. OPERA America provides to its members: artistic services which help opera companies and creative and performing artists to improve the quality of productions and increase the creation and presentation of North American works; information, technical and administrative services which reflect the need for strengthened leadership among staff, trustees, and volunteers; and education, audience development, and community services which are designed to enhance all forms of opera appreciation.

On behalf of OPERA America's membership and those that it serves, we urge you to strengthen federal support for the arts in the following ways:

- Support artistic excellence by increasing funding for the National Endowment for the Arts to \$200 million;
- Encourage international cultural exchange by increasing funding by \$10 million for the Cultural Programs Division of the State Department's Office of Citizen Exchanges;
- Enact legislation that will require U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to reduce the total processing time for O and P petitions filed by, or on behalf of, nonprofit arts-related organizations to a maximum of 45 days;
- Improve student achievement by allocating \$53 million for the Arts in Education programs at the U.S. Department of Education;
- When reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), include the following provisions: Retain the arts in the definition of core academic subjects of learning, reauthorize the Arts in Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education, improve national data collection and research in arts education, and require states to annually report on student access to all core academic subjects;
- Support legislation that strengthens the relationship between National Service and nonprofit cultural organizations and support the creation of an Artist Corps to place consisting of young artists trained to work in low-income schools and their communities;
- Promote charitable giving by enacting legislation to make permanent the IRA Charitable Rollover provision, allowing individuals to roll funds from their Individual Retirement Accounts to charity by lowering the qualifying age requirement and removing the \$100,000 cap.

We encourage you to support funding and policies that continue to strengthen opera and the performing arts in communities across the nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Scorca".

Marc Scorca  
President and CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Fitterer".

Amy Fitterer  
Director of Government Affairs