

March XX, 2007

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Chairman
Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dicks and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

We urge you to support a funding level of **\$176 million for the National Endowment for the Arts in the Fiscal Year 2008 Interior Appropriations bill**. The NEA was last funded at this amount in 1992, and has never recovered from a 40 percent funding cut in FY 1996. Today, its programs remain seriously underfunded. The American public wants and needs an affordable investment in the arts.

While the President's FY 2008 budget request includes a modest increase of \$4 million for the agency, it is not enough. Without a substantial increase, the NEA will be unable to expand popular initiatives like *American Masterpieces* without diminishing existing programs.

A budget of \$176 million would support the NEA's mission to bring the arts to all Americans. The funding would support the creation, preservation, and presentation of the arts in America through the NEA's core programs – *Access to Artistic Excellence*, *Challenge America*, *Learning in the Arts* and *Federal/State Partnerships*.

The NEA supports artistic excellence and improves access to the arts. Through these core programs, the NEA awarded 1,744 grants in 435 congressional districts last year alone.

The NEA contributes to the development and economic growth of communities nationwide. The nonprofit arts industry alone generates \$134 billion annually in economic activity, supporting 4.85 million full-time equivalent jobs and returning \$10.5 billion to the federal government in income taxes. That's an 8:1 return.

The NEA supports life-long learning in the arts. The NEA's education programs have helped to sustain support in local communities for arts education, which has been proven to help close the education achievement gap as well as to benefit children and adults in many important ways. During these critical times, Americans look to the arts for education, entertainment, and enlightenment.

We strongly urge you to increase NEA funding to \$176 million in the FY 2008 Interior Appropriations bill. By approving this budget increase, you will strengthen the NEA's ability to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to benefit from the arts. We appreciate your attention to this request, and hope we can count on your support.

Sincerely,