

PO BOX 2496  
SIOUX FALLS  
SD  
57101

○ 605 252 5979

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May 10, 2022

Rep. Dusty Johnson  
1714 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. Johnson,

On May 12, the House of Representatives Interior Appropriations Subcommittee will hold a hearing titled: Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Request for the Arts and Humanities. Our National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Chair Maria Rosario Jackson is expected to testify regarding the proposed \$204 million FY23 NEA budget.

I urge you to support the \$204 million budget proposal for the NEA in the FY23 Interior Appropriations bill to fund the NEA's core mission to strengthen the creative capacity of our communities by providing all Americans with diverse opportunities for arts engagement. Continuing to invest in our creative economy's recovery from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultural organizations and workers makes robust funding to support this mission even more critical.

According to the NEA, for every dollar we spend on federal arts initiatives, we see nine non-federal dollars leveraged, generating roughly \$500 million in matching support. An examination of NEA direct grants showed that the majority go to small and medium-sized organizations, which tend to support projects that benefit audiences who otherwise might not have access to arts programs — this is especially true in South Dakota. In the last five years, the National Endowment for the Arts distributed more than \$5,487,837 in grants in South Dakota and our 9 Native Nations.

NEA funds have supported important arts and cultural projects such as a series of classes in traditional and contemporary Lakota arts and culture, including website development, for youth living in the Cheyenne River Reservation, as well as the Lakota Music Project presented by the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra will continue its focus on developing in-depth relationships through artist residencies in South Dakota locations such as Sisseton Wahpeton Indian Reservation, the City of Sisseton, and Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, and Crazy Horse Memorial.



The NEA tax burden on the American public is just pennies on the dollar per capita. Forty percent of NEA's grant-making budget is re-granted through state arts agencies and regional arts organizations. Private support cannot substitute the leveraging role of government cultural funding, especially not in South Dakota. So not only does investing in the NEA make economic sense, the creative and cultural impact on all South Dakotans will be part of our collective story long into the future.

If I can provide further assistance, don't hesitate to get in touch with me anytime. We know your leadership requires balancing priorities and making decisions that best serve the great people of South Dakota. The National Endowment for the Arts serves our state in ways that very few other federal or state programs, if any, are equipped to do, and we need your support.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Speirs", written over a light blue line.

Jim Speirs  
Executive Director

cc. Andrew Christianson via email