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ARTSSOUTHDAKOTA.ORG



August 1, 2022

Congressman Dusty Johnson
1714 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear, Rep. Johnson,

I am writing regarding your recent vote supporting Congressman Glenn Grothman's (WI) amendment to the FY23 House Interior Appropriation Bill. After the House Interior Subcommittee recommended an FY23 budget of \$207MM for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), Rep. Grothman's last-minute amendment would have decreased funding by 25% and sent the NEA budget back to 2017 levels.

It is disappointing to see your vote in favor of Rep. Grothman's amendment at a time when the Covid 19 pandemic disproportionately impacts the creative economy. The arts industry was one of the hardest hit during the pandemic and is still struggling to fully recover. During the height of the pandemic, a Brookings Institute report of creative-industry analysis estimated losses of 2.7 million jobs and more than \$150 billion in sales of goods and services for creative industries nationwide, representing nearly a third of all jobs in those industries and 9% of annual sales. In South Dakota during 2020 and early 2021, a survey of arts non-profits tells us 94% had to cancel events. That equated to 879,259 lost program attendance with an over \$11 million negative financial impact on the sector. In addition, over 500 South Dakotans had been laid off or furloughed in the arts sector during the pandemic. And this information comes only from reporting organizations.

The sector is just starting to recover, and now is not the time to slash funding supporting the arts in South Dakota. The NEA and its state partner, the South Dakota Arts Council (SDAC), support creative expression in nearly all South Dakota counties. In FY19, the SDAC awarded 439 grants, impacting 1.35 million people throughout South Dakota, including the nine Native Nations with lands in our state. Your hometown of Pierre receives vital support from the SDAC and NEA. Organizations such as Pierre Player, the Shortgrass Arts Council, the Dakota Western Heritage Festival, the South Dakota Discovery Center, the Governor's Student Art Showcase, and others all received support from a program or grant of the South Dakota Arts Council, which is in turn supported by the National Endowment for the Arts. In a rural state like South



Dakota, the partnership of the NEA and SDAC is vital and, frankly, at times, the only "game in town" to sustain and foster the arts. See more about the [NEA impact in South Dakota here](#).

While I respect and understand your position regarding fiscal conservatism, federal dollars support South Dakota on many levels. In FY19, South Dakota's state revenue from federal funds was 33.6%. We know many industries and programs in our state benefit from federal support, which is no different for the arts industry. South Dakota is a state of great art and one reason so many visit. Mount Rushmore and Dignity, the great South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, and the nationally awarded Red Can Graffiti Jam in Eagle Butte are just a few examples of how the arts make South Dakota a great place to live and visit. Your support and leadership in DC to sustain a creative South Dakota is vital, starting with the National Endowment for the Arts.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and for your service to South Dakota. As always, I welcome any questions or support I can provide your office as you consider how your leadership impacts our state's arts sector.

Best Regards,



Jim Speirs
Executive Director

Attached: NEA Quick Facts & NEA South Dakota Fact Sheet



Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is the independent federal agency that works to give people across America the opportunity to participate in and experience the arts. The NEA is the only funder, public or private, that provides access to the arts in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Nationwide, COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on the arts. Thanks to historic investments, the NEA is helping the arts and cultural sector to recover, rebuild, and reopen. In 2020:

- Arts and cultural production in South Dakota added **2.1%** or **\$1.1 billion** to the state's economy.
- South Dakota's arts and cultural industries employed **12,768** workers. These workers earned wages and benefits totaling over **\$0.7 billion**.

GRANTS TO THE STATE

Over a five-year period (FY 2017-2021), the NEA distributed \$8,876,495 in federal funds to grant applicant organizations in this state, either directly or through state and regional partners.

The Arts Endowment awarded **39** direct grants throughout South Dakota over the past 5 years, totaling **\$6,392,337**. These direct grants included:

- Red Can Graffiti Jam, a multi-day festival blending graffiti street art and Lakota culture
- The Chamber Music Festival of the Black Hills
- Performances of Native American art at the Waniyetu Wowapi Art Park

NEA NATIONAL INITIATIVES IN THE STATE

In addition to offering direct grants, the NEA supports national initiatives benefiting people across the country.

Blue Star Museums program provided free admission to thousands of active military personnel and their families at **23** participating museums in South Dakota.

Poetry Out Loud program provided opportunities for an average of **722** students per year attending **43** unique high schools in South Dakota to appreciate—through study, memorization, and public recitation— great poetry.

The **NEA Big Read** program generated **102** community events focused on reading outstanding American literature and involving more than **7,119** adults and students in South Dakota.



Established by Congress in 1965, the **National Endowment for the Arts** is the independent federal agency that works to give people across America the opportunity to participate in and experience the arts. Our funding is project-based and goes to thousands of nonprofits each year, along with partnerships and special arts initiatives, research and other support that contribute to the vitality of our neighborhoods, students and schools, workplace and culture. The Arts Endowment is the only funder, public or private, that provides access to the arts in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories, supporting activities such as performances, exhibitions, healing arts and arts education programs, festivals, and artist residencies.

BUDGET

The National Endowment for the Arts' FY2020 appropriation of \$162.5 million constitutes approximately .003 percent of the federal budget. More than 80 percent of the appropriation is distributed as grants and awards to organizations and individuals across the country.

- 40 percent of the NEA's grantmaking budget is awarded directly to the states through their state and regional arts agencies, reaching millions more people in thousands of communities. The National Endowment for the Arts designates that a portion of every state and regional partnership grant be allocated to serving underserved communities
- The remaining 60 percent are awards made directly to organizations and individuals that apply through the Arts Endowment's funding categories.
- National Endowment for the Arts grants provide a significant return on investment of federal dollars with \$1 of NEA direct funding leveraging up to \$9 in private and other public funds, resulting in \$500 million in matching support.

FUNDING DISTRIBUTION AND IMPACT

We are fully committed to ensuring that all Americans have access and opportunity to engage with the arts

- The Arts Endowment recommends on average 2,400 grants in every Congressional District in the country.

The majority of grants go to small and medium sized organizations (budgets less than \$2 million) which tend to support projects that benefit audiences that otherwise might not have access to arts programming.

A significant percentage of grants go to those who have fewer opportunities to participate in the arts.

- 42% of Arts Endowment grants take place in high-poverty neighborhoods.
- 35% of grants reach low-income audiences of underserved populations such as people with disabilities, people in institutions, and veterans.

PARTNERSHIPS

Federal agencies and non-profit organizations partner with the National Endowment for the Arts on national initiatives, using the arts as a platform for enhancing the quality of life for all.

- Examples include: Creative Forces, Poetry Out Loud, Musical Theater Songwriting Challenge, NEA Big Read, Blue Star Museums, and the Citizens' Institute on Rural Design.

For more information and stories about the impact of National Endowment for the Arts grants and programs on U.S. communities, please visit [arts.gov](https://www.arts.gov).

