

# Arts Action News

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AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS ACTION FUND

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## First Lady Michelle Obama: Ambassador for the Arts

Throughout her first year as first lady, Michelle Obama has used her position and the White House venue to shine a spotlight on the arts.

The first lady has said she and the president are committed to making the White House “a showcase for America’s rich cultural life and opening the doors of this house to as many of our young people as we can, exposing them to classical music, exposing them to jazz, the spoken word, everything.”

In September 2009, the first lady made a point of showcasing arts and culture at the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh, where she led the spouses of world leaders on visits to a creative arts school and the Andy Warhol Museum. And in November, as Honorary Chair of the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, she hosted the Coming Up Taller Awards, which honor afterschool programs in the arts and humanities for underserved youth. During the awards ceremony Mrs. Obama said, “These awards remind us of what the power of arts and music and dance can do in the lives of our young people.”

*First lady Michelle Obama highlighted the arts during the G20 Summit in 2009, leading a tour for the spouses of G20 leaders at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh.*



In May 2009, the first lady highlighted the economic value of the arts during the re-opening of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, where she stated that “arts and cultural activities contribute more than \$160 billion to our economy every year.”

The president and first lady have already hosted and streamed online four concerts and master classes for children featuring poetry, jazz, classical music, and music inspired by the Civil Rights movement—a promising indicator of a strong arts presence in the White House for years to come.

## Arts Index Points to Need for Greater Investment in the Arts

To kick off its 50th anniversary, Americans for the Arts premiered the National Arts Index, a first-of-its-kind study measuring the health and vitality of the arts industries in America. The report analyzes data from 1998–2008 and uses a composite of information to objectively report factual trends in the arts. Much as the Dow Jones Index compiles key stock prices and trends, the National Arts Index is an invaluable tool for evaluating trends and the state of the arts in America. One of the key findings is that the financial health of arts organizations lags two years behind the business cycle. While the country slowly begins to come out of the recession in 2010, arts organization will continue to face economic challenges for two more years. We urge you to combat this funding downfall by getting active in your local arts community.



The National Arts Index fell 4.2 percent in 2008, reflecting losses in charitable giving and declining attendance at larger cultural institutions—even as the number of arts organizations increased rapidly over a 10-year span.

Source: Americans for the Arts



## Message from the President

Happy 2010! This year marks the 50th anniversary of Americans for the Arts and our nation's arts support infrastructure! I am delighted to report the Obama administration has been open and receptive to Americans for the Arts, the Arts Action Fund, and the arts community—helping to ensure that arts support continues to thrive.

The Obama administration worked with Congress to include \$50 million in job-saving grants for nonprofit arts organizations within the larger

stimulus bill in early 2009, as well as to pass two appropriations bills that increased allocations for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

The president's appointees, from U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman, have been outspoken in their commitment to artists, the arts, and arts education. New appointees to the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, such as actors Forest Whitaker and Sarah Jessica Parker and musician Yo Yo Ma, are among the biggest names working in the arts today.

At the Kennedy Center Honors in December 2009, President Obama said, "Let's never forget that art strengthens America. And that's why we're making sure that America strengthens its arts. It's why we're re-energizing the National Endowment for the Arts. That's why we're helping to sustain jobs in arts communities across the country. It's why we're supporting arts education in our schools, and why Michelle and



Following the screening of the film, *Me and Orson Welles*, President and CEO of Americans for the Arts Robert L. Lynch (L) led a panel discussion with the film's director and featured actors on the importance of arts education, moderated by Washington Post Education Writer Valerie Strauss (R).

I have hosted students here at the White House to experience the best of American poetry and music."

I am pleased that our president understands the cultural and economic value of the arts, and I commend him and his administration for a successful first year. During these difficult economic times, the president's leadership on the arts has been instrumental in positioning the arts as an economic driver.

We will continue to urge the Obama administration and Congress to follow through on the other key policy recommendations supported by our members.



While in Washington, DC, to premiere their new film *Me and Orson Welles*, Americans for the Arts arranged a meeting at the White House for actors Zac Efron and Claire Danes and the film's director Richard Linklater to lend their support to arts education issues. (L-R) Richard Linklater, Americans for the Arts Action Fund Executive Director Nina Ozlu Tunceli, Executive Director of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities Rachel Goslins, Zac Efron, White House Office of Public Engagement Associate Director Kalpen Modi, and Claire Danes.

## Honorees for Public Leadership in the Arts

Throughout 2009, and already into 2010, Americans for the Arts has honored leaders in the advancement of the arts and arts education. These honorees have shown vision and leadership by bringing heightened visibility to the value of the arts and arts education. To learn more about these awards and to nominate someone for a National Public Leadership in the Arts Award, visit [www.AmericansForTheArts.org/go/PublicLeadership](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/go/PublicLeadership).

**2009 Governor Arts Leadership Award**  
Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R-CA)

**2009 Congressional Arts Leadership Award**  
Rep. John Lewis (D-GA)

**2009 Local Arts Leadership Award**  
Mayor Greg Nickels (D-Seattle, WA)

**2009 Lieutenant Governors Arts Award**  
Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst (R-TX)

**2009 County Arts Leadership Award**  
Linn County, IA Supervisor Linda Langston (D)

**2009 State Legislator Award**  
State Sen. Richard Cohen (DFL-MN)

**2009 Artist-Citizen Awards**  
Actors Hill Harper and Kerry Washington

**2010 Governor Arts Leadership Award**  
Gov. Ted Kulongoski (D-OR)

**2010 Local Arts Leadership Award**  
Mayor Mufi Hannemann (D-Honolulu, HI)

**2010 Legendary Artist Award**  
Performer Michael Feinstein



The 2010 Local Arts Leadership Award was presented to Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann at The U.S. Conference of Mayors' Annual Winter Meeting in Washington, DC, in January. (L-R) Executive Director of The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) Tom Cochran; President of USCM and Burnsville (MN) Mayor Elizabeth Kautz; Honolulu (HI) Mayor Hannemann; Charleston (SC) Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr.; and Americans for the Arts President and CEO Robert L. Lynch.



# Shaping Federal Arts Policy

The Arts Action Fund monitors arts policy at the federal level and helps bring citizens' voices to the table when important arts issues are debated. For detailed legislative updates, please visit [www.AmericansForTheArts.org/LegislativeNews](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/LegislativeNews).

## Obama's 2011 Budget Proposes Cuts to the Arts

The Obama administration's 2011 budget recommendation released in February proposes a surprising \$6 million cut for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). However, it also includes the creation of a new agency program called Our Town, designed to strengthen communities through the arts. Our concern is that this new initiative may be hampered by the proposed reduction in the NEA's overall budget.

In addition, the administration proposed consolidating the Arts in Education program within the Department of Education's new Effective Teaching and Learning for Well-Rounded Education category, which we fear could lead to a diminished focus on arts education.

We will continue to work with the administration, and especially Congress, to ensure a strong commitment to the arts and arts education remains in the 2011 federal budget. Please contact your members of Congress to make our voice for the arts heard nationwide.

## Local Arts Agencies Distribute Federal Economic Recovery Grants to Local Arts Groups

When the federal government passed the economic stimulus package in early 2009, the arts were not left behind. You helped us advocate for \$50 million in grants to preserve jobs in the arts, and we thought you'd like to know how state and local arts agencies have been using the stimulus funds to keep the arts alive—and create jobs—in their communities.

- The Arts Council of New Orleans distributed \$200,000 to 12 community arts organizations. Mary Len Costa of the Arts Council said, "It felt like Ground Zero again for arts organizations to face state and city budget cuts when they were barely recovered from Hurricane Katrina." Among the jobs saved by the grants are nine positions for artists in the New Orleans schools.
- The Denver Office of Cultural Affairs awarded grants from \$25,000–\$75,000 to 15 local organizations. The new Denver Museum of Contemporary Art used its funding to maintain its education and outreach coordinator, while ArtStreet, a small program

engaging disadvantaged children in afterschool arts projects, used its funding to maintain its arts and technology manager position.

- Dave Lawrence of the Arts Council of Indianapolis reports that the council was able to distribute \$200,000 in grants to nine organizations in Greater Indianapolis, supporting 10 different positions in the community. Lawrence said, "With city and state budgets slashed, organizations were looking everywhere they could to find support. This funding allowed them to maintain the positions they need to fulfill their missions in the community."



Physically Handicapped Actors & Musical Artists (PHAMALY) in Denver has been hit hard by the economic downturn because of reduced funding for both the arts and disabled populations. Thankfully, it received a federal stimulus subgrant through the Denver Office of Cultural Affairs that helped it to hire all the necessary actors and stagehands to put on a fantastic production of *The Man of La Mancha*.

## Supporting Arts Advocacy in States and Cities

### It's Not All Bad News in Arlington, TX

Throughout 2009, we covered lots of stories about cuts to state and local arts funding, and with the arts lagging behind the business cycle in economic recovery, we're likely to hear more bad news in 2010 and 2011. But action at the local level makes a vital difference in tough times. We're happy to report back on a community where voters came out in support of the arts. In Arlington, TX, a \$197.5 million bond was passed last fall that includes a major influx of funds for instruments and band uniforms for schools in the Arlington Independent School District. Without the additional funding provided through voter approval of the bond measure, students in the school district would not have had proper access to in- and afterschool music education programs.

### The Arts Spur Economic Activity in North Carolina

In November 2009, the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources and Department of Commerce released a study showing that creative industries employ more people in the state than the financial industry. This was surprising news to some, especially for a state that is home to Wachovia and Bank of America. "We all know that arts and culture feed the soul," said North Carolina Secretary of Cultural Resources Linda Carlisle, "but they also feed families across the state."



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## Your Quarterly Arts Action Fund Newsletter

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Heading into Midterm Elections

## PAC Update



### ArtsVote in Midterm Elections

ArtsVote is already hard at work to help elect pro-arts candidates to Congress this November. We're focusing in particular on freshman representatives we helped elect two years ago who are coming under attack this year, like Reps. Betsy Markey (D-CO) and Dan Maffei (D-NY). We're also working to help fill open seats with arts supporters, like Rep. Paul Hodes (D-NH), who is running for the New Hampshire's open Senate seat. Plus, we need to show our support for other longtime friends of the arts, like Sen. Bob Bennett (R-UT), who is in trouble with conservatives in his own party. Our goal is to raise \$60,000 for these deserving campaigns this fall, and we can't make a difference without members like you. Use the enclosed envelope to show your support today and take a look at the new Arts Action Fund website, which launches in April, to get more involved.

## In the News

### Associated Press

**December 7, 2009**—In an article evaluating President Barack Obama's arts policy, President and CEO of Americans for the Arts Robert L. Lynch stressed the economic impact of the arts and the role of federal grants in fueling the growth in arts jobs. "[The arts have] been so successful during the past 50 years, it's good business sense for there to be a bigger investment," Lynch said.

### The Washington Post

**February 2, 2010**—In response to President Obama's proposed budget cuts to the National Endowment for the Arts, President and CEO of Americans for the Arts Robert L. Lynch questioned, "Why hamper the potential impact of this new initiative [Our Town] by reducing the NEA's overall budget?"

Americans for the Arts Action Fund is the advocacy arm of Americans for the Arts. We engage citizens in ensuring that all Americans have the opportunity to appreciate, value, and participate in the arts. Arts Action Fund members are citizen activists who are committed to helping make certain that arts-friendly public policies are adopted at every level of government and in the private sector. Arts Action News is delivered four times a year to supporters of the Arts Action Fund. Executive Director, Nina Ozlu Tunceli. [www.ArtsActionFund.org](http://www.ArtsActionFund.org).



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