

Arts Action News



The Quarterly Newsletter of the Americans for the Arts Action Fund
Volume II, 2017

ArtsActionFund.org

Record Number of Arts Advocates Lobby Capitol Hill



Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) receiving recognition for her decade-plus of arts and arts education support and leadership as a U.S. Senator and now Chairman of the critical Interior Appropriations Subcommittee with direct oversight of the NEA. She is the recipient of the 2017 Congressional Arts Leadership Award at Arts Advocacy Day.

More than 700 arts advocates representing all 50 states gathered in Washington, D.C. for the 30th Annual Arts Advocacy Day, part of the National Arts Action Summit on March 20-21. Presented by Americans for the Arts in partnership with 87 national arts organizations including Americans for the Arts Action Fund, this strong, unified coalition has been instrumental in helping to advance key legislative initiatives for over a quarter century. They were joined by legendary Tony Award-winning artists **Ben Vereen** and **Brian Stokes Mitchell**, and actress **Gabrielle Ruiz**. This year's events took place just days after the release of President Trump's proposed "skinny budget," calling for the elimination of the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Several members of Congress came and spoke out against the budget proposal, including Congressional Arts Caucus co-Chair Rep. Leonard Lance (R-NJ) and STEAM Caucus co-Chair Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR). Also providing motivating and inspiring remarks at the Kickoff were House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and civil-rights icon Rep. John Lewis (D-GA). Check out event highlights and learn about ways to keep the advocacy momentum going at AmericansForTheArts.org/AAD.

Ford Foundation President Delivers Nancy Hanks Lecture

"Art is not a privilege. Art is the soul of our civilization; the beating heart of our humanity; a miracle to which we all should bear witness, over and over again," declared Darren Walker as he began his lecture on the heels of a special performance by **Anna Deavere Smith** at the 30th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy. The lecture was presented by Americans for the Arts at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in a packed Concert Hall of 2,000 people on March 20, 2017.

After an introduction by **Thelma Golden**, Director and Chief Curator of The Studio Museum, Darren made the case for creativity in all aspects of the economy and personal life. He further addressed the need for public funding in the arts during his remarks, stating "We must invest in our ambition, in our aspiration, in that American spirit of ingenuity and sense of imagination that has always propelled this great nation forward. This is no time for a poverty of imagination in our country."



Ford Foundation President Darren Walker delivers the 30th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy at the Kennedy Center on the eve of Arts Advocacy Day. View the lecture at AmericansForTheArts.org/Hanks.

Message from President & CEO Robert Lynch



*Americans for the Arts Action Fund President & CEO Robert L. Lynch displays a copy of **The Hill**, a Capitol Hill newspaper in which Americans for the Arts placed a full-paged ad about the value of the arts. Pro-arts ads such as these will also be placed in a variety of strategically chosen local newspapers throughout the year.*

A record-breaking number of arts advocates gathered in Washington, D.C. for our national Arts Advocacy Day conference to make the strongest possible case to their elected representatives to support the arts in America, a cause more important than ever in light of the Trump Administration's recent budget proposal to eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and other federal cultural agencies.

Preserving and expanding funding for the NEA was just one of the issues Arts Action Fund members overwhelmingly voted to champion on Arts Advocacy Day, along with fully implementing the arts provisions in federal K-12 education law and preserving charitable tax deductions for nonprofit arts organizations.

Our advocacy efforts are being given a big helping hand by the services of Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, the second largest lobbying firm in Washington, D.C. Brownstein has committed to doing everything it can to advance the cause of the arts on Capitol Hill, and it is doing it pro bono thanks to its COO and our Arts Action Fund board member Steve Spiess.

One of our most exciting advocacy strategies of the new year is the placement of ads in regional newspapers around the country that are based in the states and districts of key GOP Members of Congress. More than two dozen ads will appear in local newspapers during the May Congressional recess periods.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob', located at the bottom right of the text block.

THE ARTS PUT AMERICA TO WORK.

From a Petition, to a Song, to a Movement

In mid-January, just before Inauguration Day, an opera musician in New York City read rumors of how the Trump Administration was likely to propose terminating annual funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and other cultural agencies. Being an artist—and one that strongly opposes such a proposal—Jonathan Estabrooks launched an online petition.

With his social media skills in play, Jonathan's petition grew to almost 50,000 signatures within days. Jonathan then called Americans for the Arts and through a series of conversations, and building upon his network of creative entrepreneurs, brought together a diverse group of singers, actors, dancers, writers and others to record an "Anthem for the Arts" and to film a video which would bring awareness of the importance of arts funding.

In conjunction with national Arts Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C., hundreds of artists recorded the iconic Beatles song, "A Little Help From My Friends" to support the arts in America, and the net proceeds of the song (available on iTunes and Broadway Records) is being donated to Americans for the Arts to support advocacy efforts. As of this publishing, the song's video has been viewed over 75,000 times in under a month and is an incredible example of what a few dedicated, committed people can do to build support for a cause they believe in.



Jonathan Estabrooks with diverse group of singers, actors, dancers, writers, artists and others to record an "Anthem for the Arts" and to film a video which would bring awareness of the importance of arts funding.

PAC Update



Arts Action Fund Executive Director Nina Ozlu Tunceli, Brian Stokes Mitchell and Minnesota Citizens for the Arts Executive Director Sheila Smith at the Arts Advocacy Day fundraiser for the Arts Action Fund PAC.

The Arts Action Fund hosted a PAC Fundraising Reception with Tony Award-winning actors **Ben Vereen** and **Brian Stokes Mitchell**, in conjunction with Arts Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C. In a record-breaking year, the Arts Action Fund PAC had over 135 attendees at the reception and was able to raise over \$12,000 to support pro-arts Congressional candidates. Both artists emphasized the importance of arts and arts education, as Ben Vereen said “we are the spiritual enforcers—enforcing love through the arts. That’s who we are.”

Federal Update

Appropriations Win; New Legislation; New Leadership Announcements



Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-MI) and Sen. Tom Udall (D-NM) announcing their introduction of comprehensive, bicameral C.R.E.A.T.E. legislation to support the creative economy on Arts Advocacy Day.

Congress has approved a \$2 million increase for the NEA and NEH, now fully closely out work on the FY2017 budget. Ahead remains the larger threat—the President’s proposal to close out the cultural agencies in FY2018. His request has been met with strong opposition from Congress and arts advocates from across the country, evidenced by the record numbers on the “Dear Colleague” letters led by pro-arts members of Congress and the recent success in securing a funding increase for the current year. Join our **#SAVEtheNEA** campaign to stay abreast of the latest and to weigh in with your elected leaders. Additionally, there’s good news to share about the CREATE Act, which was reintroduced in advance of Arts Advocacy Day—this time in both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate. Check our full resources on our landing page: AmericansForTheArts.org/CREATE. Rep. John Lewis (D-GA) has also reintroduced the Artist-Museum Partnership Act! We also welcome Sens. Tom Udall (D-NM) and Susan Collins (R-ME) as the new co-chairs of Senate Cultural Caucus. **As always, the Arts Action Fund will be working with Members of Congress and their staff to protect the NEA and other cultural agencies to build pro-arts support on broad legislative initiatives.**

Latest Updates: AmericansForTheArts.org/Legislative-News

State and Local Update

Thank You to the State Arts Action Network

The Arts Action Fund would like to recognize the active state arts advocacy and service leaders in Americans for the Arts’ State Arts Action Network (SAAN). The SAAN is a national network of state arts advocacy and service organizations that lead civic action on the state level to enrich lives, economies, education, and communities through the arts. The SAAN represents the on-the-ground expertise and power to influence grassroots advocates for coordinating overall efficient federal and state advocacy campaigns. Your support of your local SAAN is crucial as we carry on the good fight at the local, state, and federal levels to advocate for the arts, culture and arts education.

- Alabama Arts Alliance
- Arizona Citizens for the Arts
- Arkansans for the Arts
- Californians for the Arts
- California Alliance for Arts Education
- Delaware Arts Alliance
- DC Advocates for the Arts
- Florida Cultural Alliance
- Georgia Arts Network
- Hawai’i Arts Alliance
- Arts Alliance Illinois
- Iowa Alliance for Arts Education
- Kansas Alliance for the Arts in Education
- Kentuckians for the Arts
- Louisiana Citizens for the Arts
- Maine Alliance for Arts Education
- ArtsEngageME
- Maryland Citizens for the Arts
- Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance
- MassCreative
- Creative Many Michigan
- Minnesota Citizens for the Arts
- Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education
- Missouri Citizens for the Arts
- Missouri Alliance for Arts Education
- Nebraskans for the Arts
- Cultural Alliance Nevada
- New Hampshire Citizens for the Arts
- ArtPRIDE New Jersey, Inc.
- Creative New Mexico
- ARTS North Carolina
- Arts North Dakota
- Ohio Citizens for the Arts
- Ohio Alliance for Arts Education
- Oklahomans for the Arts
- Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon
- Citizens for the Arts in Pennsylvania
- South Carolina Arts Alliance
- Arts South Dakota
- Tennesseans for the Arts
- Texans for the Arts
- Texas Cultural Trust
- Utah Cultural Alliance
- Vermont Arts Council
- Virginians for the Arts
- Washington State Arts Alliance
- ArtsEd Washington
- Arts Wisconsin
- Wyoming Arts Alliance



Americans for the Arts Action Fund is the grassroots 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.

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Visit the Arts Mobilization Center at AmericansForTheArts.org/mobilize