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UPDATED PRESS RELEASE – July 2, 2019

## ***All Funding for Alaska State Council on the Arts Vetoed: Alaska's State Arts Agency Faces Imminent Closure***

The Alaska State Council on the Arts (ASCA), a public corporation of the State of Alaska which has served over four decades as Alaska's state arts agency, learned today that all of its funding had been line-item vetoed by Governor Dunleavy. The current fiscal year ends June 30<sup>th</sup> the next begins July 1<sup>st</sup> and this abrupt termination of funding will have many immediate effects, including but not limited to the following:

- The Alaska Legislature's collective decision to fund ASCA – adopted unanimously in the Alaska Senate and by a three-to-one margin in the House during the 2019 budget process – will be arbitrarily reversed unless Governor Dunleavy's veto is overridden in the upcoming special session.
- Recently-approved pending grants to Alaskan arts organizations, individual artists, school districts, and local arts agencies will not be paid. All grantees will forego all forms of funding, including those in the second phase of biennial grant contracts. All ASCA grant categories are subject to the veto.
- Creative Forces, a collaborative program of ASCA, the US Department of Defense, and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), which provides healing art therapy to servicemen and servicewomen with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) will end. Creative Forces (<https://www.arts.gov/national-initiatives/creative-forces>) requires a state art agency partner; ASCA is one of ten pilot state projects, and federal funds for work being done at JBER may be re-allocated to other states when the Alaska program terminates. The telehealth extension project begun this year at Fort Wainwright will also cease.
- Alaska will become the only state in the nation without students participating in Poetry Out Loud (<https://jahc.org/education/poetry-out-loud/>) the massively successful national poetry-recitation competition in which thousands of Alaskan students (and millions of American kids) learn about the art of poetry and how to speak publicly with composure, confidence, and eloquence. West Anchorage High School senior Maeva Ordaz won the national competition in 2016, and it will be impossible for any future Alaskan to follow in her footsteps with no Alaskans participating in Poetry Out Loud.
- Alaska Native Artists will no longer be able display the Silver Hand Seal to prove the authenticity of their artistic products, an established and successful program which strengthens Alaskans' position in the competitive art marketplace. There will be no State of Alaska policy or program of preventive fraud enforcement, which may bring more fake artwork into the market, increasing the sale of fake Alaska Native arts, ill-timed to provide the best experiences to the millions who visit Alaska annually. This may also undermine the continuing efforts of Alaska's Congressional Delegation to make needed

changes to federal law to allow Alaska Native artists to continue to use traditionally harvested ivory and other materials in their art.

- The Governor's Arts & Humanities Awards will cease to occur. Commissioner of Administration Kelly Tshibaka represented Governor Dunleavy at the 2019 awards in February of this year: <https://www.akgovawards.org/awards>, and these would be the last ever with ASCA's elimination.
- The status of all pieces in the Alaska Contemporary Art Bank has become uncertain. ASCA will have to address the legal and conservation considerations of the Art Bank collection, and once the answers to these questions are available, relay this information to all offices in possession of Art Bank pieces on loan. This may require a full inventory of all works in the Art Bank, and a thorough review of any contractual obligations and state and federal laws and regulations that affect our operations including the federal Visual Arts Rights Act, and possible de-accessioning of parts of the Art Bank collection.
- Alaska's annual allocation of \$700,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts will be revoked, and those funds will be distributed among the other 49 states and six territories and jurisdictions, with funds meant to serve Alaskans going to Floridians, Puerto Ricans, Californians, and Mainers.
- \$1.5 million in private foundation money currently making Alaskans' lives better and more prosperous will be rejected and sent back to those would-be benefactors.

ASCA Chairman Benjamin Brown said:

“What makes ASCA unique is that over half of our budget (almost \$1.5 million) comes from private foundation partners, a value proposition unique in state government. But all funding, including the non-state money was vetoed, and we've been ordered to shut down completely in two weeks. I hope the situation improves, but if it doesn't Alaska may have the ignominious distinction of being the only state or territory without an arts agency. That outcome is unacceptable to Alaskans, who take pride in our culture and want to see state government be agile, innovative, thrifty and effective - all values that ASCA embodies. The ASCA board stands firm in its conviction that the state's commitment to the arts should be renewed in the future.

I was so grateful to have been re-appointed to the ASCA Board of Trustees just last month by Governor Dunleavy. I was also happy that Governor Dunleavy chose to appoint two fine Alaskans I've known for many years: John Kohler of Fairbanks and Juan Muñoz of Juneau. Unfortunately, with ASCA's funding vetoed, John and Juan will not have the opportunity to serve Alaskans as ASCA Trustees.”