

**TESTIMONY TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES. March 18, 2015**
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building. Chairman: Rep. Ken Calvert, California

Testifying: Karen J. Hanan, Executive Director, Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA)

STATEMENT:

I urge Congress:

To support a budget of no less than \$155 million for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in the fiscal year 2016 Interior Appropriations bill. The work that the NEA does preserves citizen access to the cultural, educational, and economic benefits of the arts and advances creativity and innovation in communities across the United States.

"If you always do what you always did - you'll always get what you always got." Unknown

According to the US Department of Commerce, in 2012, the production of arts and cultural goods added more than \$698 billion to the U.S. economy. How does this compare to other sectors of our economy? According to the 2012 report:

- Arts and culture surpassed construction by \$112 billion,
- Arts and Culture surpassed travel and tourism by \$270 billion
- Arts and Culture surpassed agriculture by \$503 billion

The FY 2014 financial report submitted by the NEA to the Office of Budget and Management shows that in the NEA's direct grant-making categories alone, the ratio of matching to federal funds generally approaches or exceeds 9:1. This far surpasses the required non-federal match of at least one to one, and is one of the most impactful results to be found anywhere across government.

An increase of the NEA budget to 155 million from the current 146 million would be transformative for state-based organizations like my own organization, the Washington State Arts Commission.

Approximately 40% of all NEA funding is assigned directly to the states where decisions can then be based on local knowledge of a region's unique cultural, social, economic and artistic environment. Because Federal dollars mandate the states match at least one to one, the NEA funding immediately leverages and incentivizes support for arts and culture at the state level.

The Washington State Arts Commission, which received almost \$800,000 in 2014 from the NEA, requires a similar match as we re-grant the money to communities and organizations large and small, urban and very rural across our geographically and culturally diverse state. In FY2015, our commission made a total of 137 grants statewide with monies that included National Endowment for the Arts funds. The Washington State Arts Commission, like our fellow arts

agencies in each of America's 50 states and six jurisdictions, works to make the cultural, civic, economic and educational benefits of the arts available to all communities. As the state arts agency, we offer a wide array of citizen services, including public information, partnership building, technical assistance, and research and planning. Among the most important of our services is grant making, which focuses on

- Arts participation and innovation, by supporting performances, exhibitions and lifelong learning programs
- Educational success, by investing in arts education opportunities and training for students, teachers and artists
- Accessibility, by investing in programs that widen the availability of the arts, especially in rural areas and among underserved populations;
- Cultural infrastructure, by investing in arts organizations, both established and emerging, through general operating support, capacity building, professional development, and technical support.
- Artistic heritage, by investing in the preservation of cultural traditions through projects in the folk and traditional arts;
- Creative place making, by encouraging cooperative partnerships between public, private, not-for-profit, and community sectors to strategically shape, through arts and cultural activities, the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, tribe, city, or region.

The funding received by the Washington State Arts Commission from the National Endowment for the Arts is critical to our ability to support organizations and communities across our state.

Washington is geographically and culturally diverse. It is the third most linguistically diverse state in America with 163 languages spoken in its almost 500 towns that vary from the largest metropolitan-sized to the tiniest villages. In terms of support, the Washington State Arts Commission is often one of very few, and sometimes the only funding source available to small, operations and culturally diverse arts and cultural groups and organizations located in and around the state.

Examples of Washington State Arts Commission funds combining with National Endowment for the Arts funds to support remarkable programs, events and projects across our state are many, but here is just one example.

Tieton is a sleepy town with a population of 1,200. Sixty-four percent of its population is made up of Hispanic seasonal farmworkers. The town is set amongst apple orchards and fields; a tiny agricultural blip in Washington's Yakima Valley. During the 1940s and 50s, Tieton was a prosperous apple town with a railroad link, a bowling alley, a dance hall, a billiards parlor and a soda fountain. But the fruit industry changed and consolidation favored larger cities like Yakima, leaving Tieton all but forgotten. Traditional retail and service businesses struggled. Jobs were hard to come by, especially out of the apple picking season.

In 2005, Ed Marquand, a Seattle businessman happened to be riding his bike through Tieton when he hit a patch of goathead thorns and popped his tires. He looked around and saw empty storefronts that flanked a charming town square—though unkempt and weedy. He noticed that the town was surrounded in the distance by gently rolling hills blanketed in orchards. He remarked, “I was just captured by the feel of this place.”

Marquand returned later with artist and architect friends in tow. Spurred on by their enthusiasm and encouraging talks with Tieton city officials, Marquand and his partner, bought two warehouses, a former church and six empty storefronts facing the city square. The town became known colloquially as Mighty Tieton as locals and newcomers together set out to revitalize the community. Within a couple of years, the Tieton Arts and Humanities Council was formed, a nonprofit corporation with the mission of sponsoring arts and humanities events in Tieton, for the benefit of the residents of the region as well as anticipated visitors.

In 2012, Tieton Arts and Humanities applied to the Washington State Arts Commission’s “Capacity Building Project.” This grant program is designed to support organizations like Tieton Arts and Humanities that might be interested in applying for federal grant programs, but lack the institutional capacity to do so on their own.

Tieton’s application to the Washington State Arts Commission was successful and we then helped them and their partners, the City of Tieton and Marquand’s Mighty Tieton, an incubator for artisan businesses, develop and submit their first federal grant application to the National Endowment for the Arts.

The application to the NEA was successful and Tieton was awarded a \$50,000 “Our Town” grant for their ambitious “Tieton Mosaic Project.” The organization was then empowered to successfully meet the challenge of leveraging matching funds from the Educational Foundation of America, and also the Yakima Valley Community Foundation.



The project includes mosaic installations, an artisan apprenticeship program, community engagement, and student workshops. Local residents are trained as apprentices to produce and install mosaic signs and designs on public buildings and civic spaces. The project aims to establish a bold visual identity for the city and, with that, an artisan training program for residents to acquire skills in mosaic making.

Today, the Tieton Mosaic Project engages regional artists and artisans, local community members, K-12 students, business owners, and civic leaders in an on-going process of planning, education, apprenticeships, and hands-on art-making. They are focused on twin goals: creating a bold visual identity for the city of Tieton, WA, and establishing this new self-sustaining artisan business called the Tieton Mosaic Project. Things are moving swiftly ahead, and very soon, members of this esteemed committee will be able to purchase a Tieton Mosaic sign for your own house or business.

With arts and heritage front and center, a dozen new businesses have started up over the last six years in Tieton. Two large warehouses, a church, and a storefront have been developed and refurbished. Studios and production facilities are active and productive. A 1941 fruit warehouse was repurposed into functional living space known today as Tieton Lofts. What was originally nothing more than an oversized cement box, the building has been transformed into 14 urban-chic loft condominiums with energy-efficient updates — all planned around interior common spaces. The \$200,000-\$250,000 lofts sold quickly as soon as they came on the market.

Henri Matisse said that *“Creativity takes courage.”* The small but mighty town of Tieton embodies that truth.

This year, the National Endowment for the Arts will celebrate its 50th birthday. But far from showing its age, the Endowment continues to reinvent and reevaluate itself, determined to work harder and smarter on behalf of all citizens. Its work helps organizations like the Washington State Arts Commission be more effective and relevant to our constituents in a 21st century way. We know that our lives and the modern economy demand skills that are intrinsic to the arts and to arts education; where a curriculum that focuses on teaching critical thinking skills, problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity and innovation is a valuable asset in the jobs of today. The Arts offer that.

The National Endowment for the Arts, as the largest national funder of the arts in the United States, bolsters artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and their communities. Let’s wish the NEA the happiest of birthdays this year, and remembering the quote I offered at the beginning of this testimony,

“If you always do what you always did - you'll always get what you always got.” Unknown

Let’s change things in the right direction with support for at least 155 million dollars for the NEA in the next fiscal year; a small but mighty increase that will positively impact our collective capacity to do amazing work at the federal, and by extension, at the state level through agencies like the Washington State Arts Commission.

Thank You.



Karen J. Hanan, Executive Director
The Washington State Arts Commission