



## NEWS AND INFORMATION

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Americans for the Arts and the United States Conference of Mayors Present 2005 National Award for Congressional Arts Leadership to U.S. Representative Chris Shays**

WASHINGTON, D.C. —Americans for the Arts, the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America, in conjunction with the United States Conference of Mayors, will present the 2005 National Award for Congressional Arts Leadership to U.S. Representative Chris Shays (R-CT). The award, which recognizes distinguished service on behalf of the arts, will be presented today at the 2005 Congressional Arts Breakfast on Capitol Hill. The breakfast, organized jointly with the Congressional Arts Caucus, kicks off Arts Advocacy Day.

Congressman Chris Shays has demonstrated an outstanding record of advocacy and support for the arts. He has co-chaired the Congressional Arts Caucus since 2003, annually cosponsoring successful floor amendments to increase funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. In the 108th Congress, Shays helped lead efforts to educate Members of Congress about the economic and intrinsic value of the arts to communities and their citizens. He has sponsored research briefings, spearheaded *Dear Colleague* letters and floor amendments, and recruited high-profile artists such as Carole King to speak to his colleagues about the importance of the arts and arts education in our society.

"Chris Shays has been an invaluable leader in educating his fellow Congressmen and citizens on the value of the arts," said Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts. "We are very pleased to honor and recognize his extraordinary dedication and leadership in the arts."

The National Award for Congressional Arts Leadership is part of a series of Public Leadership in the Arts Awards given annually by Americans for the Arts and The United States Conference of Mayors since 1997. Earlier this year, 2005 Public Leadership in the Arts Awards

were presented to Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, Meridian (MS) Mayor John Robert Smith, and legendary musician Peter Yarrow.

"I grew up in an arts family. My parents, both performing actors, met in the theater. Listening to my father play the piano each night and hearing stories from their days on the stage gave me a profound appreciation for creative expression," said Rep. Shays. "The arts and humanities have had a profound impact on my life, and I want Americans of every generation, class, race, and creed to have the same opportunities, should they so choose."

Previous recipients of the National Award for Congressional Arts Leadership include Rep. David Obey of Wisconsin (2004), Sen. Thad Cochran of Mississippi (2003), Rep. Steve Horn of California (2002), Rep. Norm Dicks of Washington (2001), Sen. Robert Bennett of Utah and Rep. Nancy Johnson of Connecticut (2000), Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts and Rep. Mike Castle of Delaware (1999), Sen. Slade Gorton of Washington and Rep. Louise Slaughter of New York (1998), and Sen. James Jeffords of Vermont and Rep. Rick Lazio of New York (1997).

***Americans for the Arts*** is the leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education in America. With offices in Washington, D.C. and New York City, it has a record of more than 50 years of service. Americans for the Arts is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. Additional information is available at [www.AmericansForTheArts.org](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org).

*Founded in 1933, the U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with a population of 30,000 or more. The primary roles of the Conference of Mayors are to: promote the development of effective national urban/suburban policy; strengthen federal-city relationships; ensure that federal policy meets urban needs; provide mayors with leadership and management tools; and create a forum in which mayors can share ideas and information. Find more information at [www.usmayors.org](http://www.usmayors.org).*

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