



March 31, 2017



Re: FY 2018 funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Dear Members of Congress,

The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE) is a coalition of national unions representing over 4 million professional and technical workers. Included in DPE are our 12 national unions that represent people who work in the arts, entertainment, and media industry. Our unions' members are actors, broadcast journalists, craftspeople, creators, choreographers, directors, musicians, performers, instrumentalists, writers, singers, stage managers, stagehands, and many other professions.

While there is much in President Trump's budget blueprint that concerns us, we write to address the proposed elimination of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and privatization of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

We urge Congress, at a minimum, to maintain current funding levels for all three institutions. Ending federal support for the NEA, NEH, or CPB would be a radical, unprecedented action that would harm everyday people, particularly individuals who live far from metropolitan cultural centers.

Through grants, seed money, and technical support, the NEA, NEH, and CPB ensure that Americans of all means, geographies, and abilities have access to artistic and educational content. NEA, NEH, and CPB-funded programs help veterans heal from the invisible scars of war, inspire the next generation of creators and innovators, and deliver content that unites people across small towns and big cities.

In nurturing an appreciation for cultural expression, the NEA, NEH, and CPB not only benefit society, but also bolster the economy. The nonprofit arts community supports over four million jobs in the arts and related industries, including jobs for many of our members. Public broadcasting stations put people to work in family-supporting jobs producing programming that can often be the only source of free, locally managed cultural content, especially in rural areas.

Private money cannot fully replace lost funding from the NEA, NEH, and CPB. Without continued funding for the NEA, NEH, and CPB, we expect the loss of good, middle-class jobs, with the most acute economic pain being felt far from the soundstages of Hollywood and bright lights of Broadway. The job losses will be in smaller, more rural communities that rely on NEA grants to support regional theater productions and CPB funding for the upkeep of satellite transmission equipment.



As organizational leaders, we understand that budgeting requires tough choices. However, we reject the notion that federal arts funding is a financial burden for working Americans. Rather, continued funding for the NEA, NEH, and CPB is an investment that helps our members earn a living and enrich the lives of everyday Americans.

For the reasons stated here, we ask that you support continued funding for the NEA, NEH, and CPB in the Fiscal Year 2018 federal budget.

Sincerely,

Kate Shindle
President, Actors' Equity Association

Ray Hair
International President, American Federation of Musicians

James Odom
President, American Guild of Musical Artists

Judy Little
Acting President, American Guild of Variety Artists

Paul E. Almeida
President, Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO

Paris Barclay
President, Directors Guild of America

Carlo Fiorletta
President, Guild of Italian American Artists

Matthew D. Loeb
International President, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts

Lonnie R. Stephenson
International President, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

Richard Lanigan
President, Office and Professional Employees International Union

Gabrielle Carteris
President, SAG-AFTRA

Pam MacKinnon
President, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society

Michael Winship
President, Writers Guild of America, East