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May 9, 2025

Dear President Trump, United States Congress, Governor Jeff Landry,
Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser, and the Louisiana State Legislature:

As arts advocates, we are deeply concerned about the proposed elimination of funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS.) As members of the Louisiana Partnership for the Arts, we represent a network of cultural workers, arts organizations, and creative professionals who understand firsthand the essential role these programs play—not just in our sector, but in the economy, identity, and future of Louisiana and our country as a whole.

Before moving forward with these cuts, we urge you to consider the profound impact the arts have on our communities.

While we acknowledge that the FY2025 State Arts Agencies appear protected in this cycle, the trajectory suggests a looming \$1.1 million shortfall for the Louisiana Division of the Arts. This would devastate Louisiana Project Grants, which fund artists, festivals, and community programs in every parish.

The consequences would be felt everywhere:

- **Festivals** such as Festival International de Louisiane and the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival—major economic and cultural drivers—depend in part on public funding.
- **Arts education programs** in under-resourced schools face elimination.
- **Public broadcasting programs** like *La Veillée*, *Ziggy's Arts Adventure*, and *Louisiana: The State We're In*—which document and celebrate Louisiana's heritage—could disappear.
- **Historical documentaries** that preserve Louisiana's unique stories for future generations may cease production.
- **Cultural preservation efforts** that sustain Native Louisiana Tribes, folk life artists, and Cajun, Creole, and Zydeco musicians would lose crucial funding.

Louisiana's Cajun and Creole French culture has already suffered suppression, with vital traditions sidelined in the name of assimilation and children once punished for speaking French. Today, the arts are at the heart of our continued fight to preserve our language, music, and culture. Cutting funding threatens an already fragile cultural ecosystem, and we cannot afford to let our history be erased again.



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The numbers are undeniable. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the arts and cultural sector contributes **\$1.2 trillion** to the national economy—representing **5.6 million jobs** and **\$877 billion** in GDP (2021). In Louisiana, the cultural economy generates **\$7 billion** in annual revenue and supports **over 55,000 jobs** (Americans for the Arts, 2024).

Moreover, NEA funding reaches **every** congressional district, supporting rural and underserved communities that would otherwise lack access to cultural programs. These dollars are *investments*, returning value through education, economic development, and public well-being. Let us keep in mind that NEA funding represents only about .003% of the federal budget. *The NEA provides funding to 678 counties and parishes that lack access to private foundation support.* Many of our rural communities in Louisiana will feel this impact economically especially if the only economic engine in the area is arts related.

Art is not a luxury—it is *essential* to a healthy society.

Following Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana turned to the arts for healing. Faced with vast destruction and uncertainty, our people turned debris into instruments, rhythm into hope, and music into resilience. This lifeline reminded us that while our buildings were leveled, our spirit was not.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the world again relied on the arts for connection and survival. Musicians streamed concerts to unite isolated communities, families turned sidewalks into mosaics of love, and countless individuals sought solace in creative expression. The arts did not simply endure the pandemic—they helped *us* endure it.

The arts play a vital role in healing our veterans, many of whom suffer from PTSD, anxiety, and depression—the often invisible wounds of war. Music and art therapy programs provide veterans with nonverbal outlets to process trauma and rebuild emotional resilience, fostering recovery in ways traditional treatments often fail to achieve. Studies confirm that these programs improve mental health, proving that art is not merely a pastime—it is a powerful tool for healing.

Arts heal, bind, and release. They revive.

Yet now, federal cuts threaten the very lifeblood of these cultural connections.

There is a reason that presidential inaugurations incorporate music, poetry, and handcrafted works from artists whose journeys often began in publicly funded programs. The same artists whose work embodies national unity today face the risk of losing the support that allowed them to flourish.

We urge Congress and the Louisiana Legislature to **reject these cuts** and instead invest in the future by maintaining full funding for the NEA, NEH, and CPB. As Americans for the Arts affirms:



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“NEA grants have touched every American... America’s strength lies in its cultural richness, creativity, and innovation. Now more than ever, Congress must defend and restore the NEA to ensure the arts remain accessible to all Americans.”

Arts and culture *generate abundance*. Louisiana’s thriving tourism industry—built on our music, food, and people—depends on *art and culture*, which is why our State’s tourism tag line: “Feed Your Soul” is so impactful. More than 43 million visitors contribute **\$18.1 billion** in tourism spending, generating **\$1.94 billion** in state and local tax revenue—providing Louisiana households with approximately **\$1,068** in tax savings each year.

Without arts funding, we jeopardize the very heartbeat of our state’s identity.

The stakes are too high for inaction—or hasty action.

Cutting arts funding is short-sighted and unwise in a world struggling to come to terms with a vast array of social problems that require creative thinking and problem solving, skills central to arts education and the art experience. Without music, dance, theatre, and visual art, we risk raising a generation without creative expression, cultural literacy, or the tools to dream beyond their circumstances. The future needs what the arts will unlock.

The choice is yours: invest in the arts—or consider the negative impact of failing to do so. Your actions today will echo for generations.

With deep concern,

Louisiana Partnership for the Arts Board of Directors