

Congressman Higgins, local arts community warn of impact of proposed cut to federal arts program

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As Western New York prepares to celebrate the start of theater season with Curtain Up!, Congressman Brian Higgins and leaders in the Western New York arts community are warning of the impact of a House appropriations bill that cuts funding to the National Endowment for the Arts in half.

The House of Representatives fiscal year 2014 interior and environment bill provides only \$75 million in NEA funding, the lowest level dedicated to the NEA since the 1970s. NEA received \$138.4 million in federal funding in 2013.

"As we look to grow the economy, both nationally and locally, we must recognize the value of the arts as a real economic driver," said Higgins, a member of the congressional arts caucus. "From the tourism it attracts to the jobs it supports, arts and culture should be seen not just for its outstanding contributions to our community's quality of life, but for the financial contributions it delivers as a growing and thriving industry. Slashing support for the arts is completely counterproductive to the efforts we should be making to invest in our people, our communities and the unique experiences that make this nation great."

Since 2000, the National Endowment for the Arts has provided more than \$34.38 million in grants to arts and cultural organizations in New York, including nearly \$2.685 million in Higgins' district alone.

"As we make progress in re-securing support at the local and state level for cultural organizations based on their important place in the community, it is deeply disappointing to see these ill-informed and ill-timed proposed cuts at the federal level," said Tod A. Kniazuk, executive director of arts services initiative of Western New York. "There is also a double impact on our community as close to 50 organizations in Western New York receive funding from the state, an agency that is also funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. A drastic cut nationally also means a drastic cut locally and regionally."

Just a few examples of local organizations that have received NEA funding include: University at Buffalo Center for the Arts, Just Buffalo Literary Center, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Albright Knox Art Gallery and Burchfield-Penney Art Center.

A 2012 NEA grant awarded to UB Center for the Arts is supporting the "Arts in Healthcare" program. Through this initiative, local artists work at Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo and Roswell Park Cancer Institute to offer artistic programming to patients. The grant permitted additional multi-week residencies at the hospitals with international touring artists.

Thomas Burrows, executive director of the Center for the Arts, said "The center and the University at Buffalo emphasize the importance of community outreach in our activities. And as a member of the cultural community, we seek ways to advance the arts in our area. The support from the NEA was critical

to expanding upon our work in our partner hospitals, and has had a lasting impact on the communities we serve."

According to a 2007 Americans for the Arts report, nonprofit arts and culture organizations are a \$155.29 million industry in greater Buffalo, supporting 4,740 full-time jobs. Nationally, the nonprofit arts industry generates \$135.2 billion annually in economic activity.

Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is the largest national funder of the arts in the U.S. On average, every dollar in NEA funding leverages another \$9 in arts funding from other sources.

<http://www.wnypapers.com/news/article/current/2013/09/18/112618/congressman-higgins-local-arts-community-warn-of-impact-of-proposed-cut-to-federal-arts-program>