

# Congressman warns of cuts to federal arts funding

BY CHRIS CAYA, WBFO

Some prominent arts and cultural groups could be in for a major funding cut. A bill working its way through Congress could slash funding for the National Endowment for the Arts to its lowest level since the 1970s.



*Credit WBFO News photo by Chris Caya*

Tod Kniazuk, executive director of Arts Services Initiative of WNY

If a House appropriations bill is approved, Congressman Brian Higgins says National Endowment for the Arts funding would fall to \$75 million, about half as much as in 2013. The South Buffalo Democrat says the cuts are driven by politics.

He says the economy can't grow through austerity. Locally, the arts is a \$155 million industry, supporting more than 4,700 fulltime jobs.

"As we look to grow the economy, nationally and locally, we must recognize the value of the arts as a real economic driver. And also, it says something very profound about America as a society," Higgins said Monday.

Higgins points out that since 2000, the NEA has provided nearly \$2.7 million to local groups, including the Buffalo Philharmonic, UB's Center for the Arts, Hallwalls, Just Buffalo Literary Center, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and many more.

Tod Kniazuk Executive Director of Arts Services Initiative of WNY says the NEA grants have funded lots of special projects.

"So what we're really talking about is the creation of new projects and the support of

innovation and doing some additional work. Not to mention obviously the leveraging of money into this community. That certainly everyone in this community pays their money into the federal level. And the NEA is the way that we can be competitive and get some of those dollars back to Western New York," said Higgins.

Kniazuk is encouraging local residents to contact their representatives in Washington. In the meantime, he is encouraging support for the region's arts and cultural organizations.