

WNY arts & cultural threatened by Congressional cuts

- By: Meg Rossman, YNN
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AMHERST, N.Y. — "Local professional artists are employed year-round as artists in residence working directly with patients," UB Center for the Arts executive director Thomas Burrows said.

Working with patients on everything from writing to dance at Roswell and Women and Children's Hospital in Buffalo, UB's Arts in Healthcare Initiative has received national attention since its start in 2008, thanks to the National Endowment for the Arts.

"Our \$30,000 grant helped support some innovative and significant work in the hospitals."

But that work is in danger of being cut, as Congress prepares for 2014.

"The Interior and Environment Bill, which funds the National Endowment for the Arts, proposes to slash arts funding by nearly 50 percent," Rep. Brian Higgins, D-26th District, said Monday.

Bringing the endowment to \$75 million nationwide, threatening a laundry list of local programs that have

competed for and received more than \$2 million in federal funding since the year 2000.

"It enhances our quality of life," WNY Arts Services Initiative director Tod Kniazuk said. "It brings us a national and international recognition that has begun to redefine the image of Western New York."

In fact, Kniazuk said federal funding has a multiplier effect, producing \$9 in additional support for every \$1 in federal money spent, so local officials took to the stage at UB Monday asking voters and Congress to support the arts.

"It is critical that the NEA not be crippled by additional cuts," Burrows said. "Every one of us has been impacted by the arts in one way or another and our future generations deserve the same opportunities."

The bill needs the approval of the House and Senate. If passed, funding for the NEA would be at its lowest level since 1974.

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