



THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

1965 | 2000

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS



President Johnson signs the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act, establishing the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, on September 29, 1965.



Foreword

The National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Johnson in 1965. It states, “While no government can call a great artist or scholar into existence, it is necessary and appropriate for the Federal Government to help create and sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry, but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent.” On September 29 of that year, the National Endowment for the Arts – a new public agency dedicated to strengthening the artistic life of this country – was created.

Now, at thirty-five years of age, the NEA continues to carry out its public service mandate through its commitment to fostering America’s creativity and investing in our living cultural heritage. By supporting artistic excellence, forging partnerships, building more livable communities, promoting lifelong arts education, and improving access to the arts for all citizens, the agency strengthens American democracy at its core.

This Chronology updates earlier versions published on the 20th and 30th anniversaries of the Arts Endowment, compiled to show how the agency came into being and evolved. It is not meant to be a definitive history of Federal arts support. Rather, it is an abbreviated version of the history and achievements of the Endowment.

The thirty-five year public investment in the arts has paid tremendous dividends. Since 1965, the Endowment has awarded more than 111,000 grants to arts organizations and artists in all 50 states and the six U.S. jurisdictions. The number of state and jurisdictional arts agencies has grown from 5 to 56. Local arts agencies now number over 4,000 – up from 400. Nonprofit theaters have grown from 56 to 340, symphony orchestras have nearly doubled in number from 980 to 1,800, opera companies have multiplied from 27 to 113, and now there are 18 times as many dance companies as there were in 1965.

Our arts are the hallmark of the creativity and diversity that make America strong. The Arts Endowment works diligently to make the arts central to the lives of individuals, families and communities. In the words of William James, “The greatest use of a life is to spend it on something that will outlast it.” As we enter a new millennium, the National Endowment for the Arts is nurturing our nation’s creativity and cultural heritage, advancing the nation’s cultural legacy for many future generations.

Bill Ivey, *Chairman*



Chronology (1780-1965)

1780

John Adams, in a letter to his wife, writes, "I must study politics and war, that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture."

1785

Thomas Jefferson writes to James Madison: "You see I am an enthusiast on the subject of the arts."

1788

President George Washington declares that both "arts and sciences are essential to the prosperity of the state and to the ornament and happiness of human life."

1790

Establishment of the United States Marine Band marks the first Federal support of a permanent musical ensemble.

1800

The Library of Congress is established by an

Act of Congress to provide "such books as may be necessary for the use of Congress." Art and music are included in the early collection.

1817

The 14th Congress commissions John Trumbull to paint four Revolutionary War scenes to hang in the Capitol Rotunda, the first Federal support of the visual arts.

1826

John Trumbull, President of the American Academy of Fine Arts, proposes to President John Quincy Adams a "Plan for the Permanent Encouragement of the Fine Arts by the National Government."

1846

After 10 years of deliberation, Congress accepts the bequest of the late James Smithson, and establishes the Smithsonian Institution.

1859

President James Buchanan appoints a National Arts Commission to promote the arts, but it is disbanded two years later because of a lack of Congressional appropriations.

1879

Representative Samuel J. Cox (D-NY) introduces a Joint Resolution in Congress to establish "a council on arts matters." No action is taken.

1891

President Benjamin Harrison signs legislation establishing the National Conservatory of Music in New York City. One year later it opens with Antonin Dvorak as its first artistic director.

1897

A Congressional proposal is introduced for a National Office of the Arts. No action is taken.

1899

The Utah Arts Institute is established, the first state-created arts council in the nation.

1906

The Federal government accepts the donation of the oriental art collection of Charles Lang Freer, who also provides for a building and endowment. The Freer Gallery, part of the Smithsonian Institution, opens to the public in 1923.



Chronology (1780-1965)

1909

President Theodore Roosevelt appoints a 30-member Council of Fine Arts, but it is shortly disbanded due to lack of funds.

1910

On May 17, President Taft and the Congress establish the Commission on Fine Arts “to advise generally upon questions of art.” It deals primarily with the architectural appearance of Washington, D.C.

1913

The National Institute of Arts and Letters is incorporated under a Federal charter by an Act of Congress. The American Academy of Arts and Letters is incorporated three years later, and both organizations merge in 1976.

1934

President Franklin D. Roosevelt establishes the Treasury Department’s Section on Painting and Sculpture, the first government bureau involving the arts, which assigns artists to decorate Federal buildings around the country.

1935

Public service employment programs are established under the Works Progress Administration: the Federal Writers Program, the Federal Theater Project, the Federal Art Project, and the Federal Music Project. More than 40,000 artists are directly employed by the government.

1937

Andrew W. Mellon donates his art collection to the United States, pledges funds for construction of the National Gallery of Art, and creates an endowment for the Gallery, which opens to the public in 1941.

1937

In Congress, Representative William I. Sirovich (D-NY) introduces legislation to establish a Department of Science, Art & Literature to be headed by a Cabinet-rank officer. Later in the year, Representative John M. Coffee (D-WA) introduces a bill to establish a Bureau of Fine Arts. Neither proposal is reported out of committee.

1938

Senator Claude Pepper (D-FL) introduces a bill for the creation of a Bureau of Fine Arts. The bill is not reported out of committee.

1948–49

The country’s first local arts agencies are established: the Quincy Society of Fine Arts in Illinois and the Winston-Salem Arts Council in North Carolina.

1949

Congressman Jacob K. Javits (R-NY) introduces House Joint Resolution 104 in the 81st Congress to provide for a national theater, national opera and national ballet. Javits stresses that he is not talking about a physical structure, but rather “an integrated, country-wide organization aided by the Federal government.” The Resolution is not reported out of committee.

1951

President Harry S. Truman asks the Commission on Fine Arts to investigate ways in which the arts could be helped by the Federal government.



Chronology (1780-1965)

1953

The Commission on Fine Arts reports to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, recommending that a cultural center be established in Washington, D.C., under the jurisdiction of the Federal government.

1955

President Eisenhower, in his State of the Union address, advocates the establishment of a Federal Advisory Commission on the Arts: *"In the advancement of the various activities which would make our civilization endure and flourish, the Federal government should do more to give official recognition of the importance of the arts and other cultural activities."*

1955

Numerous bills to support the arts are introduced in Congress over the next several years, but no action beyond limited hearings is taken. Nelson Rockefeller, then Undersecretary of Health, Education and Welfare, pushes for the establishment of a National Council on the Arts but is unsuccessful with Congress.

1958

President Eisenhower signs P.L. 85-874 to establish a national cultural center for the performing arts. Thirteen years later, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts opens in Washington, D.C.

1960

The New York State Council on the Arts is founded by Governor Nelson Rockefeller.

February 9, 1961

Representative Frank Thompson (D-NJ) introduces H.R. 4172 to establish an advisory council on the arts, within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, that would coordinate private and government arts activities. Hearings are held, but the bill is defeated in the House.

September 2, 1961

President John F. Kennedy appoints Roger L. Stevens as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Cultural Center.

March 1962

President Kennedy appoints August Heckscher as his Special Consultant on the Arts and asks him to prepare a report on the relationship between the arts and the Federal government.

January 14, 1963

Senator Javits (R-NY) introduces S. 165 "to establish a United States National Arts Foundation." Initial co-sponsors are Senators Joseph Clark (D-PA), Hubert Humphrey (D-MN), and Claiborne Pell (D-RI).

April 11, 1963

Senator Humphrey introduces S. 1316 "to establish a National Council on the Arts and a National Arts Foundation to assist the growth and development of the arts in the United States." Initial co-sponsors are Senators Clark, John Sherman Cooper (R-KY), Javits, Russell B. Long (D-LA), Lee Metcalf (D-MT), Pell, Jennings Randolph (D-WV), Abraham Ribicoff (D-CT), and Hugh Scott (R-PA).



Chronology

(1780-1965)

May 28, 1963

August Hecksher submits his report, *The Arts and the National Government*, which recommends the establishment of an Advisory Council on the Arts and a National Arts Foundation to administer grants-in-aid.

June 12, 1963

By Executive Order 11112, President Kennedy establishes the President's Advisory Council on the Arts. The President is assassinated before members can be appointed.

"We have agencies of the Government which are concerned with the welfare and advancement of science and technology, of education, recreation, and health. We should now begin to give similar attention to the arts."

October 26, 1963

At the dedication of a new library at Amherst College and as a tribute to the poet Robert Frost, President Kennedy says:

"I see little of more importance to the future of our country and our civilization than full recog-

nition of the place of the artist. If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him.

"I look forward to an America which will reward achievement in the arts as we reward achievement in business or statecraft.

"I look forward to an America which will steadily raise the standards of artistic accomplishment and which will steadily enlarge cultural opportunities for all our citizens."

December 20, 1963

After hearings chaired by Senator Pell, Chairman of the Senate Special Subcommittee on the Arts, the Senate passes S. 2379 which combines provisions of the two earlier bills, S. 165 and S. 1316, to establish a National Council on the Arts and a National Arts Foundation.

January 8, 1964

In the House, Representative Thompson introduces H.R. 9586 and H.R. 9587, both "to provide for the establishment of a National Council on the Arts and a National Arts

Foundation to assist in the growth and development of the arts in the United States."

January 23, 1964

President Lyndon B. Johnson signs Senate Joint Resolution 136, renaming the National Cultural Center as the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and designating it as Kennedy's official memorial in Washington.

May 13, 1964

President Johnson names Roger L. Stevens as Special Assistant to the President on the Arts, the first full-time arts advisor.

August 20, 1964

H.R. 9586, to establish a National Council on the Arts, passes the House of Representatives by a vote of 213 to 135. The Senate passes the bill the following day on a voice vote.

September 3, 1964

The National Arts and Cultural Development Act of 1964 is signed by the President, establishing the National Council on the Arts, providing for a chairman, the Secretary of the



Chronology

(1780-1965)

June 10, 1965

The Senate debates and passes an amended S. 1483 to establish a National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities.

June 24–27, 1965

The second meeting of the National Council on the Arts is held in Tarrytown, New York.

September 15, 1965

The House passes S. 1483, with amendments. The following day, the Senate agrees with House amendments and passes legislation establishing the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities as an umbrella for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities and their respective Councils.

September 29, 1965

President Johnson signs P.L. 89-209, the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act.

“Art is a nation’s most precious heritage. For it is in our works of art that we reveal ourselves, and to others, the inner vision which guides us as a nation. And where there is no vision, the people perish.”

Under this new law, Arts Council membership is increased to 26. The Chairman of the National Council on the Arts, Roger Stevens, becomes first Chairman of the Arts Endowment. Henry Allen Moe becomes the first Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The Foundation is composed of the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities, an interagency committee of Federal officials. The Foundation has no administrative or programming identity separate from its components. Each of the two Endowments is served by a respective advisory body, the National Council on the Arts and the National Council on the Humanities.



Roger Stevens announces the receipt of \$100,000 from the Martin Foundation, the first donation to the special Treasury Account, established under the Endowment's legislation and requiring a 3-to-1 match in non-Federal to Federal funds.

At the fifth meeting of the Council, the Federal-State Partnership Program, mandated by law to begin in Fiscal Year 1967, is launched, with \$2 million to be made available to all 50 states and special U.S. jurisdictions. The first grants for non-profit professional theaters are recommended, and funds are set aside for art in public places. The Council discusses and later recommends ways to involve the United States in international arts events. A matching grant is made to provide a United States exhibit, assembled by the National Collection of Fine Arts of the Smithsonian Institution, at the September 1966 Biennale in Venice.



The first Arts Endowment grant went to the American Ballet Theatre, shown here in a production of *Symphonie Concertante*. Photo by Martha Swope.



Coming Up Taller: Arts and Humanities Programs for Children and Youth At Risk, a joint research publication of the Endowment and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, is released at a White House ceremony. The study reveals how local artists and educators can help turn around the lives of young people.

The Rockefeller Foundation publishes the report *Looking Ahead: Private Sector Giving to the Arts and the Humanities*, summarizing funding trends to cultural organizations. It states that, despite significant growth in foundation giving in the 1980s, the National Endowment for the Arts remains the largest, single funder of the arts in the United States.

The *Open Studio* project in partnership with the Benton Foundation is established, bringing free public Internet access to arts organizations in all 50 states and establishing a mentoring program for artists and arts organizations to develop and maintain Web sites.



The New Hampshire Symphony Orchestra, recipient of a 1996 grant, performs under James Bolle at the Sainte Marie Church in Manchester. *Photo by Tom Stearns.*



The Endowment releases *Artists in the Work Force: Employment & Earnings*. The study indicates that the number of working artists has increased 127 percent since 1970. It also reports that artists earn less than other professionals and frequently work more than one job to stay above the poverty line, despite averaging over four years of college education.

Six regional summits boosting cultural tourism are launched to forge partnerships between the tourism industry and the cultural community. The Endowment works with a cadre of federal agencies, national service organizations and corporations to promote and strengthen cultural tourism.

The Endowment publishes *Imagine*, a resource and information guide to help parents provide arts education to their children.



Wenyi Hua, internationally regarded as the premier artist in kunqu, one of China's oldest and most refined forms of opera, and recipient of a 1997 National Heritage Fellowship. *Photo courtesy of Wenyi Hua.*



FISCAL YEAR

2000

OCT. 1, 1999-SEPT. 30, 2000

The House votes to fund the NEA at the 1999 level after rejecting both a proposed increase and a proposed decrease. The Senate votes for a \$5 million increase. Final legislation for Fiscal Year 2000 includes a government-wide funding reduction of 0.38 percent, and the agency's budget drops slightly to \$97.6 million.

To celebrate its 35th year, the Endowment presents *America's Creative Legacy: An NEA Forum at Harvard* at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The event brings together the current Chairman and four former NEA Chairs for a discussion of U.S. arts policy.

The Endowment broadens its outreach by further supporting the production and distribution of radio and television programs aimed at nationwide audiences.

A new initiative funds artists' residencies in community settings, providing positive alternatives for youth in the form of after-school arts programs.



The Indian Hunter in Oak Dale Cemetery in Urbana, Ohio is a replica of an original sculpture by John Quincy Adams Ward. The work is being conserved through *Save Outdoor Sculpture*. Photo by Venus Bronze Works, Inc.

The Endowment invests in several Leadership Initiatives designated as Official Millennium Projects by the White House Millennium Council. These projects highlight artistic excellence and include significant community involvement in all 50 states:

- Under *Artists & Communities: America Creates for the Millennium*, coordinated by the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, host communities sponsor visual and performing artists' residencies in which artists and local citizens together create new works for the 21st century.
- *Arts on Millennium Trails*, administered by the National Association of State Arts Agencies, supports the creation of community-centered public art projects along the 50 Millennium Legacy Trails designated by the U.S. Department of Transportation.
- *Continental Harmony*, administered by the American Composers Forum, provides for composers' residencies and the creation of new musical works reflecting the lives and hopes of host communities, with many premiere performances on July 4, 2000.



- *The Favorite Poem Project*, conceived by Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky and conducted in partnership with the Library of Congress, Boston University and the New England Foundation for the Arts, celebrates the poems Americans love through public readings and the creation of an audio and video archive of people from varied backgrounds reading their favorite poems aloud.
- *Live at the Library 2000*, in cooperation with the American Library Association, develops opportunities for literary, visual and performing artists to present their work in libraries across the country.
- Through *The Mars Millennium Project*, an interdisciplinary learning project of the Arts Endowment, U.S. Department of Education, NASA and the J. Paul Getty Trust, students in grades K-12 work with artists and scientists to design model communities for life on Mars in the year 2030.
- *SOS! 2000 — Save Outdoor Sculpture*, a project of Heritage Preservation, funds conservation treatment of artistically and historically significant outdoor sculpture.
- *Treasures of American Film Archives*, in cooperation with the National Film Preservation Foundation and 12 major film archives across the country, preserves, screens and distributes to public libraries a rich collection of “orphan,” or noncommercial, films from the past century.



U.S. Poet Laureate and Boston University Professor of English and Creative Writing Robert Pinsky is at the helm of the *Favorite Poem Project*. Photo courtesy Boston University Photo Services.



National Council on the Arts

Current Members

(As of January, 2000)

Gordon Davidson
Patrick D. Davidson
Terry H. Evans
Joy Harjo
Ronnie F. Heyman
Speight Jenkins
Nathan Leventhal
Marsha Mason
Cleo Parker Robinson
Judith O. Rubin
Joan Specter
Richard Stern
Luis Valdez
Townsend D. Wolfe, III

Serving in an ex officio, non-voting capacity:

U. S. Representative Cass Ballenger (R-NC)
U.S. Senator Mike DeWine (R-OH)
U.S. Senator Richard S. Durbin (D-IL)
U. S. Representative Nita M. Lowey (D-NY)
U. S. Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL)
(vacant – U. S. House of Representatives)

Former Members

Maurice Abravanel (1970–76)*
Kurt Herbert Adler (1980–87)*
Margo Albert (1980–85)*
Marian Anderson (1966–72)*
Martina Arroyo (1976–82)
Elizabeth Ashley (1965–66)
William Bailey (1992–97)
David Baker (1987–94)
James Barnett (1980)
Thomas Bergin (1979–84)
Robert Berks (1969–70)
Phyllis P. Berney (1986–91)
Leonard Bernstein (1965–68)*
Theodore Bikel (1978–82)
Anthony A. Bliss (1965–68)*
Sally Brayley Bliss (1987–94)
Angus Bowmer (1974–79)*
Willard Boyd (1976–82)
David Brinkley (1965)
Nina Brock (1987–94)
Richard F. Brown (1972–78)*
Trisha Brown (1994–97)
Albert Bush–Brown (1965–70)*
Philip Brunelle (1992–96)
Henry J. Cauthen (1972–78)
Norman B. Champ, Jr. (1979–86)
Van Cliburn (1974–80)
Susan M. Collins (ex-officio) (1998)+

Phyllis Curtin (1988–91)
Jean Dalrymple (1968–74)*
Hal C. Davis (1976–78)*
Kenneth Dayton (1970–76)
Agnes de Mille (1965–66)*
Rene d'Harnoncourt (1965–68)*
J. C. Dickinson, Jr. (1976–82)
Richard C. Diebenkorn (1966–69)*
C. Douglas Dillon (1982–89)
John T. Doolittle (ex-officio) (1998)+
Allen Drury (1982–88)*
Charles Eames (1970–76)*
Clint Eastwood (1972–78)
William Eells (1976–82)
Duke Ellington (1968–74)*
Ralph Ellison (1965–66)*
Paul Engle (1965–70)*
Joseph Epstein (1985–94)
Leonard L. Farber (1980)
I. Ronald Feldman (1994–99)
O'Neil Ford (1968–74)*
William P. Foster (1996–98)
Helen Frankenthaler (1985–92)
Martin Friedman (1979–84)
Robert Garfias (1987–96)
Virginia B. Gerity (1970–72)*
Roy M. Goodman (1989–96)
Martha Graham (1985–87)*
Barbara Grossman (1994–99)
Sandra Hale (1980)
Donald Hall (1991–97)
Lawrence Halprin (1966–72)
Marvin Hamlisch (1989)
R. Philip Hanes, Jr. (1965–70)
Hugh Hardy (1992–97)
Mel Harris (1988–91)
Huntington Hartford (1969–72)
Rev. Gilbert Hartke, O.P. (1965–66)*
Helen Hayes (1966–69; 1971–72)*
Peter deCourcy Hero (1991–96)
Charlton Heston (1966–72)
Margaret Hillis (1985–91)*
Celeste Holm (1982–88)
Richard Hunt (1968–74)
Marta Istomin (1991–97)
Arthur I. Jacobs (1981–87)
Judith Jamison (1972–77)
Kenneth M. Jarin (1994–98)
Colleen Jennings Roggensack (1994–97)
Robert Joffrey (1980–87)*
Bob Johnson (1987–94)
James Earl Jones (1970–76)
Herman David Kenin (1965–68)*
M. Ray Kingston (1985–92)
Ardis Krainik (1987–94)*
Eleanor Lambert (1965–66)
Jacob Lawrence (1978–84)
Warner Lawson (1965–68)*
Raymond J. Learsy (1982–88)
N. Harper Lee (1966–72)



Erich Leinsdorf (1980–84)*
Harvey Lichtenstein (1987–94)
Samuel Lipman (1982–88)*
Bernard Lopez (1979–84)
Wendy Luers (1988–96)
Talbot MacCarthy (1985–91)
Roger Mandle (1989–96)
Jimilu Mason (1966–72)
Louise McClure (1991–97)
Wallace D. McRae (1996–98)
Charles McWhorter (1970–76)*
Robert Merrill (1968–74)
Arthur Mitchell (1987–94)
Toni Morrison (1980–87)
Carlos Moseley (1985–91)
Jacob Neusner (1985–90)
Rev. Leo J. O'Donovan, S. J. (1994–98)
Gregory Peck (1965–66; 1968–74)
I. M. Pei (1980–87)
William L. Pereira (1965–68)*
Jorge M. Perez (1994–98)
Roberta Peters (1991–97)
Sidney Poitier (1966–70)
Harold Prince (1976–82)
Lloyd Richards (1985–92)
Jerome Robbins (1974–79)*
James D. Robertson (1972–78)*
Kevin Roche (1989)
Richard Rodgers (1965–68)*
Lida Rogers (1980–87)

Maureene Rogers (1978–84)
James Rosenquist (1979–84)
Rosalind Russell (1972–76)*
George Schaefer (1982–88)*
Franklin Schaffner (1976–82)*
Thomas Schippers (1974–76)*
Gunther Schuller (1974–80)
Rudolf Serkin (1968–74)*
George Seybolt (1974–80)*
Robert Shaw (1979–84)*
Beverly Sills (1970–76)
David Smith (1965)*
Oliver Smith (1965–70)*
Robert Stack (1982–88)
John Steinbeck (1966–68)*
Isaac Stern (1965–70)
George Stevens, Sr. (1965–70)*
Ruth Carter Stevenson (1969–70)
Jocelyn Levi Straus (1988–96)
William E. Strickland, Jr. (1991–97)
Geraldine Stutz (1976–82)
James Johnson Sweeney (1965–68)*
Billy Taylor (1972–78)
William Van Alen (1982–88)
Edward Villella (1968–74)
E. Leland Webber (1970–76)*
Harry Weese (1974–80)*
Donald Weismann (1966–72)
Eudora Welty (1972–78)
Dolores Wharton (1974–80)

George White (1992–97)
Nancy White (1966–72)
Anne Porter Wilson (1972–78)
Robert Wise (1970–76)
Otto Wittmann (1965–66)
Catherine Yiyu Cho Woo (1991–96)
James Wood (1985–94)
Jessie Woods (1979–85)
Rachael Worby (1994–98)
James Wyeth (1972–78)
Rosalind W. Wyman (1979–85)
Minoru Yamasaki (1965–69)*
Stanley Young (1965–66)*

+ Member, U. S. Congress
* Deceased

