

I rise today to highlight the recent increase in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities. The Fiscal Year 2010 Interior Appropriations bill, which President Obama has signed into law, contains \$167.5 million in funding for both agencies, an increase of \$12.5 million over last year's level. This is on top of the \$50 million that the NEA received in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to preserve jobs in the arts. As a member of both the Arts and Humanities Caucuses, I want to thank Representatives *Slaughter*, *Platts*, *Price* (NC), and *Petri*, as well as Chairman *Dicks*, for their hard work in pushing for these funding increases.

The arts and humanities play a crucial role in our society: they enhance our creativity, promote critical aspects of education, and provide Americans with the opportunity to view works of beauty and personal expression. Through exposure to the arts and humanities, our children are inspired to explore their own creativity and encouraged towards positive development in the course of their educational careers. There are also economic benefits of local arts in our communities, not just for those employed in theaters or museums, but also for tourism and economic revitalization programs. The downturn in philanthropic giving, brought on by the economic collapse, has constrained or even closed cultural institutions and, in turn, the restaurants, hotels, and construction industries that rely on their success. This is just one more reason that these funding increases are needed.

I also want to recognize President Obama for understanding the important role that the arts and humanities play in enriching our lives and strengthening our economy. The President has appointed two exceptionally qualified individuals to head the NEA and NEH. Jim Leach, our former colleague, has a distinguished academic background, including his recent service as Visiting Professor of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School. He brings to the NEH a first-hand understanding of the needs of educators, historians, curators, researchers, archivists and scholars. Rocco Landesman, the Director of the NEA, has a long and varied career in the performing arts, and has brought an energy and focus to the job that will help foster a vibrant artistic landscape.

Again, I rise to celebrate these important funding increases, and I look forward to working with the President and my colleagues to strengthen support for the arts and humanities.