

Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (NY-28) helped launch a day of activism on behalf of the arts community by appearing at a rally with arts and national advocates and later by testifying about the need to increase funding nationally for arts programs. Slaughter appeared at a rally this morning with actors Jeff Daniels and Kyle MacLachlan, which preceded an arts award ceremony for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Slaughter also met with a select group of regional theater representatives, including Mark Cuddy, Artistic Director of the Geva Theatre in Rochester and Heather Randall, wife of famed actor Tony Randall who joined their colleagues from across the nation for Arts Advocacy Day. Throughout the day Slaughter sported a New York Shakespeare Festival t-shirt showing pride for her home state. [Photos of the day's events are available here](#) .

Slaughter is a longtime advocate of the arts community and is Co-Chair of the Congressional Arts Caucus. For more on her leadership in the arts, [click here](#) .

Below is a copy of her prepared testimony before the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior and Environment:

“Good morning. Thank you, Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Simpson for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee today on an issue that is near and dear to my heart—the promotion of arts and culture through support of the National Endowment for the Arts. Mr. Chairman, it is a pleasure to work with you in support of federal arts initiatives, and I very much appreciate all of your efforts. I would also like to thank Congressman Todd Platts for joining me in leading the Congressional Arts Caucus in the 111th Congress.

Our creative industries have not been immune to the ongoing economic crisis; in fact, they have been particularly hard hit as corporate donations decrease, consumer spending on arts and culture activities dwindle, organizations struggle to maintain their budgets, and arts and humanities funding decline as states struggle to manage their fiscal challenges.

As our nation continues to shift from an industrial manufacturing economy to one based on ideas and information, cities and states increasingly recognize that the arts and culture are important economic assets. These industries create jobs, attract investments, generate tax revenues, and stimulate local economies through tourism and urban renewal.

That is why both the National Governor’s Association and the U.S. Conference of Mayors agree that investing in arts and culture-related industries provides important economic benefits to local and regional economies. It is also no surprise that America’s overall nonprofit arts and culture industry generates \$166.2 billion economic activity every year. The national impact of this activity is significant, supporting 5.7 million jobs and generating \$29.6 billion in government revenue. In my district alone, there are approximately 1,200 arts-related businesses that employ nearly 16 thousand people.

Moreover, in fiscal year 2009, the NEA awarded more than \$110 million dollars through almost 2,400 grants reaching all 435 congressional districts. While the NEA’s budget represents less than 1 percent of total arts philanthropy in the United States, NEA grants have a powerful multiplying effect, with each grant dollar typically generating seven to eight times more money in matching grants. No other federal agency or private organization facilitates nationwide access to exceptional art to this extent.

As you may know, the NEA’s funding was slashed by 40 percent in 1995 and 1996, and has never recovered from the cut it sustained. We all appreciate the 10 million dollar increase for the NEA in fiscal year 2009 and the 12.5 million dollar increase in fiscal year 2010. Nevertheless, its invaluable programs remain seriously underfunded, and the agency continues to struggle to meet the growing demand for its popular programs. From the work of nonprofit arts agencies to the impact of cultural tourism, the creative sector is important to state economies all across the country. Federal support for America’s nonprofit cultural organizations must go on if we hope to continue enjoying the substantial benefits they bring.

In addition to the economic benefits we must continue to expose our children to the arts; this is essential if we ever hope for them to reach their fullest potential. Exposure to the arts fosters learning, discovery, and achievement in our country. Research has proven that participation in arts education programs stimulates the creative, holistic, subjective and intuitive portions of the human brain.

Employers today in America and abroad are looking for creative and dynamic young men and women to fill their rosters. Learning through the arts reinforces crucial academic skills in reading, language arts, and math. But just as important, learning through the arts gives young people the skills they need to analyze and synthesize information, and to solve complex problems. Educating children early and continuously in the arts will prepare them for the work in today's innovative and creative postindustrial society.

But these instrumental benefits are not what, ultimately, draw people to the arts. People seek experiences with the arts for emotional and cognitive stimulation. We all know the transformative power of a great book, painting, or song. A work of art can evoke extraordinary feelings of captivation, deep involvement, amazement and wonder. This evocative power is so rare in a world where we tend to grasp things almost exclusively in terms of their relation to practical needs and purposes. Stimulating this mental and intellectual activity only enhances our creativity and imagination, but also strengthens our ability to empathize with others, and deepens our understanding of the human spirit. In today's globalized world, these factors cannot be ignored. We cannot assign a price tag to the intrinsic benefits the arts bestow on individuals and across communities and society at large.

I understand that there are many important requests before your Subcommittee this year, and that there are many federal agencies struggling to overcome funding shortages. However, I am compelled today to ask that you take into consideration the returns we get on our investment in the arts. American artists share with us a piece of their spirit and their soul with every creation. It is a labor of love for artists, and it brightens the life of each one of us - bringing us joy and comfort, enlightenment, and understanding in ways impossible to find otherwise.

The arts and artists of America are our national treasure, which this great Nation needs, deserves, and must support as do other nations around the globe.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today, and I urge you to continue your support for NEA funding."