OBAMA-BIDEN TRANSITION PROJECT

THIS DOCUMENT WAS PRODUCED BY AN OUTSIDE PARTY AND SUBMITTED TO THE OBAMA-BIDEN TRANSITION PROJECT.

Performing Arts Alliance
1211 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
November 21, 2008

John Podesta, Co-Chair
Presidential Transition Team
General Services Administration
1801 F Street, NW, Room #6242
Washington, DC 20405

Co-Chair Podesta:

On behalf of the national associations listed below, please accept the enclosed arts policy recommendations to be submitted to the Office of Presidential Transition.

American Association of Museums
Americans for the Arts
Association of Art Museum Directors
Association of Performing Arts Presenters
Chamber Music America
Chorus America
Dance/USA
League of American Orchestras
Literary Network
National Alliance for Musical Theatre
National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
National Council for Traditional Arts
National Performance Network
National Network for Folk Arts in Education
OPERA America
Theatre Communications Group

We thank you for the opportunity to communicate with President-Elect Obama and his transition team.

Regards,

Townley Clardy

Townley Clardy, Manager
Performing Arts Alliance

Enclosures

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Arts Policy in the New Administration

November 21, 2008

Recommendations to the Office of Presidential Transition
on behalf of

American Association of Museums
Americans for the Arts
Association of Art Museum Directors
Association of Performing Arts Presenters
Chamber Music America
Chorus America
Dance/USA
League of American Orchestras
Literary Network
National Alliance for Musical Theatre
National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
National Council for Traditional Arts
National Performance Network
National Network for Folk Arts in Education
OPERA America
Theatre Communications Group

The arts and cultural community welcomes the opportunity to communicate with President-Elect Obama and his staff in re-imagining how the federal government can inspire and support creativity in communities nationwide through robust policies that advance participation in the arts for all Americans.

The following policy recommendations have been developed by the national associations listed above, whose memberships comprise thousands of American cultural institutions and artists as well as state and local government arts agencies. We speak as a collective voice for our members, who make enormous artistic, educational, and economic contributions to the well-being of the nation and its communities.

President-Elect Obama's platform in support of the arts acknowledges the importance of American creativity and addresses a range of key federal policy areas that can be strengthened in the new Administration. We whole-heartedly affirm his goals of boosting support for arts education, improving cultural exchange and the U.S. visa process for foreign guest artists, mobilizing an ArtistCorps, increasing funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), providing health care for artists, and advancing fair tax policies for the arts. As you are aware, Federal policies affect the arts across a broad swath of issue areas involving many agencies, including the NEA, National Endowment for the Humanities, and Institute of Museum and Library Services, as well as the Departments of State, Interior, Treasury, Education, Transportation, Homeland Security, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

For many years, however, federal policy towards the arts has been fragmented and uncoordinated, lacking coherence and occasionally at cross-purposes with itself. To complement President-Elect Obama's current arts platform, the following recommendations in several key areas address, in varying degrees of detail, ways in which federal leadership can amplify the capacity of the arts to help our nation meet its goals of increased prosperity, international diplomacy, and community vitality. We ask above all that the new Administration approach arts policy holistically. To that end, one of our recommendations is that it appoint a senior-level official in the White House itself. We also urge a more coherent presence for the arts within the various agencies and the opportunity for the arts to be included in forthcoming economic stimulus programs.

We hope that the Office of Presidential Transition will find these recommendations useful as it assembles the new team, and we would be glad to discuss any of them in further detail.

National Endowment for the Arts
Cultural Exchange
Arts Education in School, Work, and Life
National Service and the Arts
Appoint Senior-Level Administration Official to Coordinate Arts and Cultural Policy
The Role of the Arts in the Not-for-Profit Community

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National Endowment for the Arts

Background

It is the mission of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to foster the excellence, diversity, and vitality of the arts in the United States and to broaden public access to the arts. The NEA must provide support for building the capacity of American arts organizations and artists to create and share their work, by initiating national programs, partnering effectively with state and local arts agencies, and helping to ensure lifelong learning in the arts for every American. We urge the Administration to empower the National Endowment for the Arts with the authority and resources to broaden and deepen participation in the arts throughout the United States.

Policy Recommendations

Support a National Endowment for the Arts with the **resources** to provide national leadership.

- Create a capacity-building initiative to support artistic excellence, improve organizational financial structures, develop a national cultural arts infrastructure, and broaden participation by all Americans.
- Support arts education by engaging educators, artists, and arts organizations in extending the experience in arts education through lifelong learning, and collaborating with the U.S. Department of Education to advance the federal role in K-12 arts education.
- Make flexible grants that increase the capacity of American arts organizations and artists to create and present meaningful arts experiences for Americans, recognizing the value of establishing fellowships to individual artists, providing grants for multi-year support, and permitting arts service organizations the opportunity to regrant funds.
- Increase the NEA budget to $319.2 million, the FY 1992 peak budget level of $176 million adjusted for inflation and population as a step toward providing a more appropriate level of artistic benefits to the American people.

Support a National Endowment for the Arts with the **capacity** to provide national leadership.

- Expand the research capacity of the NEA and the federal commitment to initiating research issues in the arts and cultural policy.
- Involve close consultation with artists, arts organizations, and the communities they serve in developing and advancing new programs and initiatives at the NEA as well as enhancing existing programs.
- Enhance support and technical assistance to the field through such means as instituting site visits and technical assistance grant support, and serving as a convener for policy panels.
- Nurture collaboration around goals shared by not-for-profit arts organizations and the commercial arts sector.
- Strengthen the National Council on the Arts through appointments broadly representative of artistic disciplines and concerns, geographically diverse, and characterizing the multiple and collective cultural interests of all Americans, and create a stronger forum for expanding the presence of and access to the arts in this country.

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Cultural Exchange

Background

International cultural exchange in the performing, visual, literary, and folk arts is a valuable tool for addressing U.S. diplomatic goals, strengthening our country's international relations, and enriching the skills of our artists. The shared experience, which transcends any language gap, can bring together people of different backgrounds, allowing cultural exchange to serve as a tool for diplomatic efforts. By reinforcing the commonalities among cultures and illuminating our unique differences, cultural exchanges foster understanding and, at a time when the U.S. image abroad is in dire need of improvement, investing in cultural exchange is essential.

Artists make powerful and effective ambassadors, and their skills have the profound ability to inspire both at home and abroad. Just as it is important to send American artists abroad, there is tremendous value in helping foreign artists share their talents with American audiences. Cultural exchange results in a more vibrant U.S. cultural scene and as artists experience and share their creative products, a broadening of their creative skills takes place. Additionally, cultural exchange serves to expand the development of international trade relations.

Policy Recommendations

- Strengthen support for cultural policy among senior leadership at the Department of State and increase federal funding for cultural exchange programs. Leadership should provide greater staffing and funding resources to facilitate cultural exchange opportunities and raise the public visibility of federal support. Likewise, create a dedicated position within the Domestic Policy Council to focus on international cultural policy, which would allow cultural exchange to have a broader focus beyond the availability of program funding. By the joint effort of these leadership positions, cultural exchange could enter and enhance national and international policy discussions.

- Encourage increased public/private partnerships to maximize resources used for the promotion of cultural exchange. Opening avenues to funding from multiple sources creates new opportunities to participate in cultural exchange and subsidized touring. Furthermore, public/private partnerships may enable participation in multi-year, sustainable exchange programs.

- Expand Americans' access to the cultures of the world through an increase in support for translations (fiction, poetry, drama, and books about the performing and visual arts).

- Improve the U.S. visa and tax procedures for foreign guest artists, which are burdensome and prohibitive. Welcoming foreign artists to perform in the United States provides Americans the opportunity to experience a diversity of artistic talent and encourages a supportive climate for U.S. artists abroad.

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Arts Education in School, Work, and Life

Background

In order to respond to the changing climate of global competitiveness, demographic shifts, and economic disparity, major changes to the delivery of education to our nation's children are inevitable. As our nation contemplates these changes, and prepares students to be global citizens, the federal commitment to arts education must be strengthened so that the arts are implemented as a part of the core curriculum of our schools and are integral to every child's development. The recommendations below are consistent with President-Elect Obama's public statements and proposals in support of a comprehensive arts education for every student.

When needed most, the arts are being cut from our schools.

- The arts are uniquely able to boost learning and achievement for young children, students from economically disadvantaged circumstances, and students needing remedial instruction.

- A 2007 study from the Center on Education Policy has found that, since the enactment of NCLB, 30% of districts with at least one school identified as needing improvement have decreased instruction time for arts and music. These are the districts whose students are most responsive to the benefits of the arts, as demonstrated through numerous research studies.

The public, business leaders, and economic experts agree that the arts are essential to a complete education and preparing a 21st century workforce.

- According to the Conference Board, there is overwhelming consensus from superintendents (98%) and corporate leaders (96%) that "creativity is of increasing importance to the U.S. workforce." Of those corporate respondents looking for creative people, 85% said they were having difficulty finding qualified applicants with the creative characteristics they desired.

- The New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, in its report *Tough Choices or Tough Times* (2006) states, "It is a world in which comfort with ideas and abstractions is the passport to a good job, in which creativity and innovation are the key to the good life…"

- A Lake Research poll of 1,000 likely voters revealed that, "83% of voters believe that a greater focus on the arts – alongside science, technology, and math – would better prepare students to address the demands of the 21st century."

Policy Recommendations

Prevent economic status and geographic location from denying students a comprehensive arts education.

- Ensure equitable access to the full benefits of arts education when reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act so that all, not just some, students can learn to their full potential.

- Exercise leadership to encourage arts-based and other creative learning environments for academically at-risk students participating in Title I-funded programs.

- Retain the arts in the definition of core academic subjects of learning and reauthorize the Arts in Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education.

- Fund after-school arts learning opportunities and support arts education partnerships between schools and community arts and cultural organizations.

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Move federal policy beyond simply declaring the arts as a core academic subject to actually implementing arts education as an essential subject of learning.

- Require states to issue annual public reports on the local status and condition of arts education and other core academic subjects.
- Improve national data collection and research in arts education.
- Invest in professional development opportunities for teachers in the arts.

Deploy arts education as an economic development strategy.

- Authorize and encourage inclusion of arts learning in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) initiatives in order to foster imagination and innovation. Without the arts, STEM falls short of its potential to advance education and workforce development.
- Fully preparing students with the creative skills they will need to advance our nation's position in the 21st century global economy requires implementing the arts as a core subject of learning and ensuring that all students attain cultural literacy.
- Ensure that the full range of federal initiatives that advance workforce development, such as Department of Labor programs, provide training in the skills of creativity and imagination.

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National Service and the Arts

Background

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNS) works to fill various unmet needs, from education and housing to healthcare and community development. The arts bring individuals of all ages together, increase communication across cultural and ethnic boundaries, strengthen public education, and bring joy and entertainment to millions of Americans. Together, National Service and the arts create a powerful force, demonstrating the ability for Americans to take initiative, tap into their creative forces, and work together to address a broad array of unmet needs in our country.

The arts have a successful record of partnering with the Corporation for National and Community Service. AmeriCorps members have helped to build and administer summer arts camps in rural communities, designed and painted murals in low-income city districts, and strengthened programming at local arts councils. Learn and Serve America has partnered with arts organizations to strengthen arts education and community service education in the public schools in Florida and RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) members, under the SeniorCorps Program, have toured Delaware teaching art and music to children in after-school activities.

Additionally, a study issued by the National Endowment for the Arts in 2006, *"The Arts and Civic Engagement: Involved in Arts, Involved in Life,"* found that individuals who participate in the arts are more likely to volunteer in their communities and engage in positive civic activities.

A stronger, more clearly defined relationship between the arts and national service will enable our country to more effectively meet community needs in education, community understanding, and economic development while allowing millions of people to enjoy and participate in the arts.

Policy Recommendations

The Corporation for National and Community Service oversees three large programs: AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and SeniorCorps. Arts organizations and art-related projects have a proven record of filling unmet community needs through AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and SeniorCorps.

- To strengthen the relationship between the three CNS core programs, arts organizations, and individual artists, it is recommended that CNS give specific reference to community arts projects and not-for-profit cultural organizations in the list of eligible national service programs as detailed in the National and Community Service Trust Act.

- Further, CNS should create, within the Special Initiatives Program, a recognition program for a successful community arts project with a noticeable impact on unmet needs.

Expand and strengthen national service initiatives at senior administration levels, above and beyond the Corporation for National and Community Service.

- Establish a "Volunteer Generation Fund" to help not-for-profit organizations recruit and manage more CNS volunteers.

- Establish a Commission to study and improve how the federal government, not-for-profits, and the private sector can work together to meet national challenges effectively.

- Establish a network of "Community Solution Funds," venture capital funds for the not-for-profit sector to support innovation in the sector.

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CNS should seek to develop a fourth program branch to be known as the ArtistCorps, to connect artists, not-for-profit arts organizations, volunteers, and CNS resources with communities across the country to fulfill unmet needs in education, community development, economic activity, and culturally diverse communities. To assist with this recommendation, it is suggested that CNS:

- Include the word, "cultural," as a primary need in the National and Community Service Act.

- Partner with private initiatives in the visual, performing, literary, and folk and traditional arts, such as the Music National Service Initiative (www.musicnationalservice.org), which brings the skills of professional musicians to supplement music education in the public schools and provide lifelong learning opportunities for all ages.

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Appoint Senior-Level Administration Official to Coordinate Arts and Cultural Policy

Background

Policy issues relating to the arts and culture have reached a level of diversity and complexity where the National Endowment for the Arts' grant-making and leadership role alone cannot sufficiently address our nation's cultural policies. The enormous potential to integrate the creative economy, technology issues, changing demographics, and workforce development into policy through the federal government will require leadership directly from the White House.

There are various federal agencies that maintain programs relating to the arts: service at Corporation for National Service, international exchange at the State Department, and arts education at the U.S. Department of Education to name a few. Beyond these examples, there is greater opportunity to bundle together a portfolio that would provide leadership in economic development opportunities at the U.S. Department of Commerce, intellectual property issues, and other arts-related areas.

Current policy advisory groups similar to our recommendations exist, providing helpful guidance in how to construct the best fit:

- The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities is an advisory committee traditionally led by the First Lady that makes recommendations for awards and participates in diplomatic activities relating to international cultural events; however, this committee is outside the direct policy work developed by the President's staff.

- The Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), in the Executive Office of the President provides a good example of policy work within the White House, led by a director with an Assistant to the President rank.

Policy Recommendations

- The President should name a senior-level administration official in the Executive Office to coordinate arts and cultural policy, guiding initiatives from federal agencies responsible for tourism, education, economic development, cultural exchange, intellectual property policy, broadband access, and other arts-related areas.

- This new Administration official or office would help to supply critical information for those exercising the "bully pulpit" of the White House, such as the President, the First Lady, and other top leadership figures. The bully pulpit could be used to encourage philanthropy and promote support of the arts and artists. It could further the search for model approaches that allow the arts to contribute to the economy and ensure that the American people's access to artistic work is not limited by systemic choke points. Finally, it could urge all Americans to learn and engage personally in the arts.

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The Role of the Arts in the Not-for-Profit Community

Background

Unique in the world in its size and scope, America's not-for-profit sector provides a multitude of services that in most other nations are delivered by government agencies. From health care to social services to arts and culture, American not-for-profit organizations enrich lives in communities large and small nationwide. Acknowledged to be more efficient and flexible than the government and more service-focused than the corporate sector, not-for-profit organizations rely on contributions and volunteers, with individual citizens choosing where and when to donate their funds and services.

A large percentage of the cultural institutions in this country are not-for-profit, charitable organizations with a mission of service. This service comes in many forms, nourishing the imagination, providing emotional solace in times of need; educating children, teachers, and lifelong learners; and strengthening communities. As one leader has said, our institutions "reflect creativity, history, culture, ideas, innovation, exploration, discovery, diversity, freedom of expression, and the ideals of democracy." They also include millions of people in a host of capacities, including artists, scholars, administrators, technicians, carpenters, accountants, and many more.

Not-for-profit arts organizations protect and add to America's cultural heritage, making it accessible to all through exhibitions, performances, and online programming. These organizations give Americans access to the best of the past and present, providing inspiration, education, and entertainment. In presenting cultural heritage, they are governed by a commitment to their mission: excellence, integrity, and transparency. Historically, these institutions have relied on the generosity of donors and volunteers, with a very small percentage of funding coming from governmental or corporate sponsors. Ticket sales and admission fees alone do not come close to subsidizing the artistic presentations, educational offerings, and community-based programming of not-for-profit arts organizations. A significant percentage of direct financial support for non-for-profit arts organizations is derived from charitable giving, and without this support, the ability of these organizations to serve the public would be significantly diminished. Diverse types of charitable giving provide support for arts organizations of all sizes: individual contributions; planned giving; family, business, and corporate foundation grants; in-kind contributions; and gifts of property. There are no profits or shareholders, therefore income is put back into service to the community.

Policy Recommendations

Ensure that the fundamental characteristics of federal support for the not-for-profit community, which have built an unrivalled cultural sector that is the envy of the world, not only remain in place but are strengthened for the future.

- Any mission-related income is exempt from federal tax, as is any endowment income.
- Real property is exempt from property tax.
- Charitable contributions should be fully tax-deductible.
- Governance is by a board of volunteers.
- Contributions of their own work by artists and writers should be tax deductible, as provided by the Artist-Museum Partnership Act (cosponsored by Senator Obama on February 25, 2008). The new Administration could include this as a provision in their budget proposal next year.