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The Lawyers’ Committee for Cultural Heritage Preservation’s Position on Proposal to
Defund the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities

As lawyers, law students, and legal professionals advocating for cultural heritage, the Lawyers’
Committee for Cultural Heritage Preservation (LCCHP) opposes the current federal budget
proposal by the Trump administration to defund the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and
National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Such an action would be devastating to cultural
institutions that rely on government grants to preserve, research, curate, and conserve cultural
heritage in the United States. Particularly at risk are valuable cultural and arts education
programs that would not be allowed to continue their vital role in local communities without the
more than 2,200 grants, in an amount exceeding $130 million, awarded by the NEA every year
since 2014 and the more than 208 grants, totaling $21.7 million, awarded by the NEH this year
alone (for more information see: NEA Strategic Plan and NEH Announces $21.7 Million for
More than 200 Humanities Projects and Programs Nationwide). The proposed funding cuts are
contrary to LCCHP’s Statement of Principles and its values.

Especially valued by LCCHP members is the $125.8 million that the NEA has dedicated
between 1975 and 2016 to preserving folk and traditional arts in the United States. The NEA’s
Folk and Traditional Arts branch sponsors apprenticeships that have led to community scholar
training, oral history digitization programs, and studies of folk and traditional arts; folk life
festivals across the nation which provide workshops, craft demonstrations, and dialogue about
traditional crafts; training programs that help teachers bring traditional culture into the
classroom, integrating cultural heritage with social studies and English classroom education; and
instruction for community members to identify and document folk art in their neighborhoods and
archive culturally significant materials. The NEA touts that their Folk and Traditional Arts
program “provides critical support for the smallest of communities and least known of artistic or
cultural forms” by awarding grants to communities “often rich in culture but poor in resources”
(NEA, “Folk and Traditional Arts Fact Sheet,” November 2016).

We ask our members and supporters to take the following action as Congress considers the
federal budget for Fiscal Year 2018:
1. Sign the Petition to Preserve the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Petition
to Oppose Trump’s Budget that Destroys Funding for the Arts and Humanities:
2. Send letters or call their local government representatives (elected officials can be found here using your zip code);
3. Visit http://www.neafunded.us/ for information about NEA funded programs in your area;
4. Read The New York Times editorial, “The Folly of Abolishing the NEA” by Thomas Campbell, former Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art;
5. Make a donation, become a member, or patronize a museum or art non-profit in your local community to fill the possible funding gap;
6. Post on the social media sites of their government representatives using tags #savanaugh, #saveneh, #nehmatters, and #neamatters;
7. Speak with their professional colleagues and students about the risks of defunding the NEA and NEH; and
8. Encourage government officials to pass national, state, and local legislation that articulates a public policy supporting the arts, acknowledges the public’s moral right to preserve our shared cultural heritage, and enforces and incentivizes the preservation of cultural heritage in the United States.

The NEA and NEH, despite the fact that their budget accounted for 0.006% of the 2016 federal budget, drive the creation and preservation of valuable cultural heritage in the United States (Washington Post, “Trump reportedly wants to cut cultural programs”). LCCHP asks that Congress oppose the defunding of the NEA and NEH and continue to promote cultural heritage initiatives both domestically and internationally.

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