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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 #savenea, #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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