



MEMO

To: Interested Parties
From: Americans for the Arts Action Fund
Federal Affairs Team
Re: 50 States 50 Days Project Outline

Summary

This is a memo outlining the 50 States 50 Days initiative that will take place this summer, July-September. We will be presenting this initiative in detail via a [webinar](#) (Thursday, July 8th 3pm) to a national audience. This memo is written for any interested party to learn about, and participate in this local advocacy opportunity.

Timing & Messaging

As you may know, the annual Arts Advocacy Day is the centerpiece of our legislative efforts in Washington D.C., but there is a strong need for arts advocates to use their incredible arts institutions **at home** to convey their message about the arts in a setting that reinforces themes of economic development, jobs, small business, arts education and partnerships between artists, institutions and local policy makers.

Starting on Saturday, July 31 and continuing until Saturday, September 18, Americans for the Arts Action Fund will coordinate a “50 States 50 Days” initiative that supports local advocacy activities in all 50 states and in as many congressional districts as possible.

This initiative is an extension of national Arts Advocacy Day and we envision it being a way to further all of our advocacy efforts to building stronger relationships with members of Congress and their staff. For arts advocacy groups and activists, the initiative is an opportunity to:

- Engage and educate local district offices on arts related issues;
- Mobilize arts advocates, including those who have not been able to make the trip to DC for national Arts Advocacy Day;
- Reinforce the role of your arts advocacy organization as a ready resource for Members of Congress, their staff and their constituents.

We hope that by providing you with a toolkit and planning and logistics guidance, that this will be a welcome endeavor that will raise the profile of your organization.

Event Format

The goal of 50 States 50 Days is to combine the benefits of holding an event in an arts environment with a discussion on federal arts policy. To maximize the advocacy possibilities, we will recommend that hosts pursue the following three types of meetings:

- ***Official – Member Hosts***
 - Member Hosted Event – A member of Congress who hosts a event themselves would be the gold-standard in this effort. This scenario would demonstrate the highest level of commitment and support to the arts community.
 - Member Hosted Meeting - If Members are not available to attend arts activities then, at a minimum, local arts leaders could meet with them at their congressional office during the August recess to discuss arts policy issues.

- ***Private – Nonprofit Organization Hosts***
 - Nonprofit Hosted Event - Local arts leaders would invite the Member to take part in discussions on specific policy issues at one or more arts activities. The event would be designed to maximize the messaging of the advocacy topics. We intend these events to be policy-focused and related to current congressional activities, so our preference is that you invite only the current Member of Congress, not congressional candidates, to participate in your event.
 - Nonprofit Invitation - Some members, particularly Senators, may present challenges in securing their participation in a programmatic event or even a meeting in their office. One solution may be to identify an arts agency leader, trustee of an institution or other elected official who may have a personal relationship to invite the Member to an arts event (theater performance, music act, opera, festival, exhibition, etc) as an advocacy activity.

- ***Political - Nonprofit Hosts Forum*** – Depending on the electoral situation, you may find it more advantageous and appropriate to coordinate a political event, and invite the candidates for congressional office to attend. This format carries with it greater public outreach responsibilities and is specifically addressed in the Legal Considerations Memo.

Policy Focus

While Arts Advocacy Day typically includes 10-12 policy issues, this community advocacy day effort will focus on just three. This is because there is no dedicated briefing day that would allow for detailed policy guidance – and because the format of the local events are not expected to allow for more than 2-3 topics to be discussed.

The policy focus for 50 States 50 Days will be on the following topics, all selected for their broad appeal and their immediate relevance to the Congressional schedule this Fall:

- **NEA** - Support for the National Endowment for the Arts, specifically Challenge America because of its national reach to hundreds of communities, and the NEA's *Our Town* proposal. This issue could include discussion and participants focusing on your local creative economy, community development, artists as entrepreneurs, civic engagement, cultural districts, etc.
- **Arts Education** - Support for increased funding for Arts in Education program at U.S. Department of Education and strengthening arts education in Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA, or No Child Left Behind Act). To promote arts education the event could take place at a school, arts education service partner, company that employs artists or uses creative skills, a visit to an arts education class or performance, etc.
- **Artist-Museum Partnership Act** – Need to increase co-sponsorship support for this legislation and highlight local relevance. This was selected because of the immediate relevance to local museums and artists.

Operations

Through new tools on the Americans for the Arts Action Fund website we will provide you with resources to set up, program and communicate to grassroots advocates in your community. There are three categories of operations for this project to work:

Toolkit

1. Materials for the Host

- a. Customizable press release
- b. Instructions on how to build local event and request Congressional meeting(s).
- c. Memo on legal considerations

2. Materials for Event/Audience

- a. Issue Briefs on the National Endowment for the Arts
- b. Arts Education
- c. Artist Museum Partnership Act
- d. One-page research briefs on the benefits of arts education, government funding and Creative Industries.
- e. A summary of policy recommendations to serve as a leave-behind piece.

3. Arts Action Fund Website

- a. This initiative has a dedicated section on the Arts Action Fund [website](#), and will include the toolkit, map of participating locations, and sharing of media (pictures, video).
- b. Each participating location will be able to set up a dedicated page within the AAF 50 States 50 Days website with the ability to share event details and communications and upload materials.

Simulated Steps to Planning Your Event

Hosting a Private Event – Checklist of Immediate Steps

1. Review the calendar of events in your community (during July 31-Sept.18) for arts events that could be enhanced to include an advocacy program, or just do your own event.
2. Contact your [state advocacy leader](#) to see if they are working on a similar or event nearby.
3. Review memo on legal considerations regarding private event management
4. Secure permission from event host to include discussion of federal policy issues
5. Invite your Member of Congress/Senator to attend (use draft invite)
6. Develop program to include discussion of NEA, arts education and/or Artists-Museum Partnership Act. Invite participants to speak on each topic, (i.e. invite a local artist to talk about interest in donating art to local museum). Circulate Issue Briefs and Research one-pagers.
7. Issue press release on event (use draft press release)
8. Videotape event, with 3 minute interview of Member of Congress
9. Invite local organizations to [sign on to Arts Education statement](#), and individuals can sign petition online (TBA).
10. After event, share pictures and video on 50 State 50 Days website.

Hosting a Political Event – What You Need to Know

1. Review the calendar of events in your community (during July 31-Sept.18) for arts events that could be enhanced to include an advocacy program.
2. Review memo on legal considerations regarding political event management
3. Select pre-existing event, or develop new event to invite all candidates for congressional office to participate.
4. Contact your [state advocacy leader](#) to see if they are working on a similar or event nearby.
5. Issue press release on upcoming event, outlining activities and candidates (use draft press release)
6. Develop program to include discussion of NEA, arts education and/or Artists-Museum Partnership Act. Invite candidates to speak on each topic. Circulate Issue Briefs and Research one-pagers.
7. Videotape event, with 3 minute interviews of each candidate
8. Request each candidate fill out Arts Action Fund PAC survey
9. After event, share pictures and video on 50 State 50 Days website.