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### **Shays Testifies In Support of Increased Arts Funding**

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Christopher Shays (R-CT), Co-Chair of the Congressional Arts Caucus, today testified before the House Interior Appropriations Committee in support of increased funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

Shays' testimony follows:

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today in support of increased funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

I respectfully ask you to increase funding for the NEA from \$124 million in FY 07 to \$176 million in FY 08.

As Co-Chair of the Congressional Arts Caucus with my colleague, Louise Slaughter, it has been a privilege to work for increased federal support for the arts.

I grew up in an arts family. My Mom and Dad, both performing actors, met in the theater. Listening to my father play the piano each night and hearing stories from their days on the stage gave me an appreciation for creative expression.

I know the arts make a significant contribution to our lives.

The NEA supports artistic excellence and improves access to the arts. Through its core programs, the NEA awarded 1,744 grants in 435 Congressional districts last year alone.

In fact, just this week, the NEA Chairman Dana Gioia and First Lady Laura Bush came to my hometown, Bridgeport, for the Big Read.

The Big Read brought together people of all ages and classes from four towns in our region - Bridgeport, Shelton, Norwalk and Stamford -- to read To Kill a Mockingbird. A local group of student actors performed a scene from the book, followed by a panel discussion about the book and the importance of literacy.

It was a wonderful day that capped off many months of reading and discussing an important work of literature across our community.

It is one example of the impact the NEA's programs can have on our local communities.

I believe the NEA and NEH are good investments. The Fourth Congressional District of Connecticut houses 2,900 arts-related businesses that employ 11,094 people.

Nationwide, the nonprofit arts industry generates \$134 billion annually in economic activity, supports 4.85 million full-time equivalent jobs, and generates \$24.4 billion in government revenue annually.

The arts fuel innovation and creativity - the basis of our economy. The arts should play a central role in the discussion about how to make our country more competitive and how we foster innovative thinking.

This year, the Arts Caucus is supporting \$176 million in FY 08 funding for the NEA's core mission and to expand popular initiatives like the Challenge America program.

Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member, the arts have had a profound impact on my life, and I want Americans of every generation, class, race and creed to have the same opportunities, should they choose. Investing in the National Endowment for the Arts helps provide that opportunity.

Thank you for your support of the NEA.

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