Americans for the Arts released Americans Speak Out About the Arts, one of the largest national public opinion surveys of American perceptions and attitudes towards the arts and arts funding. The new research demonstrates that Americans continue to be highly engaged in the arts and believe more strongly than ever that the arts promote personal well-being, help us understand other cultures, are essential to a well-rounded education, and that government has an important role in funding the arts.

A large national sample of 3,023 adults were polled online by Ipsos in May 2018 on topics such as the importance of arts education, support for government arts funding, personal engagement in the arts, and personal and community benefits that come from engaging in the arts.

Key findings from Americans Speak Out About the Arts in 2018 include:

- 91% of Americans show overwhelming support for arts education.
- 73% agree the arts give the nation’s communities identity and unity.
- 72% of Americans are highly engaged in the arts and experience them in unexpected places.
- 69% agree the arts improve personal well-being and provide meaning to citizens’ lives.
- 64% of Americans approve of government funding for the arts is viewed favorably.
Federal Update

In February 2019, the U.S. House and Senate reached a border security agreement that averted a second partial government shutdown in two months. Within this deal, both the NEA and NEH were funded for the rest of fiscal year 2019 at $155 million each, a slight increase from FY 2018 levels. With this agreement in place, Congress has turned to the appropriations process for FY 2020—which is already behind schedule.

Congressional Spotlight

Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN) was elected to Congress in 2000 to Minnesota’s 4th congressional district and made history as only the second Minnesota woman elected to serve in Congress since statehood in 1858. Representative McCollum is the new Chair of the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, which allocates funding to the NEA, NEH, Smithsonian museums, and to the nation’s federal monuments and national parks. She is a longtime member of the Congressional Arts Caucus and the 2007 recipient of the Americans for the Arts and U.S. Conference of Mayors joint Congressional Arts Leadership Award.

State and Local Update

California

With the elections of 2018 fading into a distant memory, the results of those elections are beginning to manifest themselves. Newly elected California Governor Gavin Newsom (D) proposed an increase in permanent funding for the California Arts Council from $16 million to $26 million in his first budget.

Kansas

The Arts Action Fund has received word from newly-elected Kansas Governor Laura Kelly (D) that she is supportive of increased funding for the KCAIC. Under the control of previous administrations, the KCAIC has struggled to stay alive with a barely functioning budget of only $188,000. Initially, former Governor Sam Brownback had completely zeroed-out the Arts Action Fund for the California Arts Council from $16 million to $26 million in his first budget.

New Hampshire

New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu’s (R) budget has proposed tripling the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts budget, from 30¢ per capita to $1.00.

New Research on Importance of Arts Integration in the Classroom

A new study conducted by John Hopkins University published in the journal Trends in Neuroscience and Education provides strong correlational evidence that involvement in the arts improves students’ academic outcomes and memory of learning math and science.

Message from President & CEO Robert Lynch

Dear <<First Name>>,

Americans for the Arts and the Arts Action Fund have the pleasure of working directly with thousands of elected officials at the federal, state and local levels. Since 1997, Americans for the Arts has honored elected officials at all levels of office with our Public Leadership in the Arts Award. Recently, we presented the following awards: Utah Governor Gary Herbert (R); Connecticut Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman (D); California State Senator Ben Allen (D); Bloomington, IN Mayor John Hamilton (D); Reno, NV Mayor Hillary Schieve (D); the Hillsborough County, FL Board of County Commissioners; artists Michael Bivins, Jonathan Green and Kate Raudenbush. This new Congress begins with two new co-chairs installed to lead the Congressional Arts Caucus—Reps. Chellie Pingree (D-ME) and Elise Stefanik (R-NY). Representative Pingree was elected to Congress in 2008 to Maine’s 1st congressional district and is the first woman elected to serve that district. She currently sits on the House Appropriations Committee, including the subcommittee that provides funds to the National Endowment for the Arts.

Representative Stefanik—who is also a co-chair for the House STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Arts and Math) Caucus—was elected to Congress in 2015 to serve New York’s 21st congressional district. At the time, Rep. Stefanik was the youngest woman ever elected to Congress at the age of 30. She currently sits on the House Education and Labor Committee with key oversight of federal arts education policy.

Chellie Pingree (D-ME)  Elise Stefanik (R-NY)