

Name of Organization Submitting Testimony: Association of Art Museum Directors
Testimony Submitted to Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Regarding FY 2014 Appropriations for National Endowment for the Arts and National
Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a statement for the record regarding FY 2014 appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). We respectfully request that the Subcommittee approve a funding level of \$155 million for the NEA and \$155 million for the NEH, which would restore them to their FY 2011 levels.

In a statement submitted last year, we provided information about an upcoming exhibition - *Children of the Plumed Serpent: The Legacy of Quetzalcoatl in Ancient Mexico* - that had received support from both the NEA and the NEH. Now that the exhibition has run its course, we thought that members of the Subcommittee might be interested in its impact.

During its three-month run at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), 83,162 people attended. In addition:

- 310 K-12 teachers attended “Evenings for Educators,” which present strategies to incorporate the visual arts into the classroom. The programs included a lecture, gallery tours and activities, and hands-on workshops. Educators received curriculum materials containing a thematic essay on the exhibition, color prints, lesson plans, and a CD of additional resources. All programs were interdisciplinary and aligned with California state content standards.
- 37 school groups were given tours led by docents.
- 2,800 people attended four Sunday afternoon programs for children and their families focusing on the exhibition. Families enjoyed dance and art workshops and learned how artists in ancient southern Mexico were inspired by the ancient Plumed Serpent god, Quetzalcoatl. A musical performance was held on the BP Grand Entrance featuring La Banda Filarmonica Maqueos. Bilingual gallery tours (Spanish/ English) were led by Education Gallery Teachers. Like Evenings for Educators, Family Sundays are privately supported.
- Seven buses were provided for families from communities throughout Los Angeles County, including Cypress, Glendale, North Hollywood, Pacoima, and south-central Los Angeles, to attend the four programs; approximately 450 participated. Outreach and transportation are privately supported.
- In conjunction with the exhibition, LACMA worked with the nonprofit organization 826LA to design a series of writing workshops. The final workshop included a visit to LACMA and a curator-led tour of the exhibition. LACMA provided two free buses and free admission for students and their families to visit the museum.

- Over a thousand people participated in other public programs including lectures, panel discussions, and a teen event.

After closing in Los Angeles, *Children of the Plumed Serpent* traveled to the Dallas Museum of Art, where total attendance was 34,953. As at LACMA, the museum in Dallas also built significant programming around the exhibition.

This exhibition, which received grants from both the NEA and NEH, is merely one example of the great work that both agencies support, and that directly benefits large numbers of people across the country.

As mentioned in last year's statement, the exhibition also received federal support through the arts indemnity program.

Offered by the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities and administered by the NEA, the indemnity program has played a vital role in many of the most important traveling exhibitions in this country since it was established in 1975. Without it, many objects would not be able to travel to and within the U.S. the indemnity program

That some exhibitions may not go forward without indemnity was proved to the Subcommittee's satisfaction in 2007, when it expanded the program to cover purely U.S. exhibitions (previously the program only covered exhibitions with a substantial foreign component). At that time, subsequent to Hurricane Katrina, insurance companies had recalculated their loss estimates, and insurance became much more expensive and difficult to obtain, especially in zones prone to events such as hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes. Important exhibitions had either been curtailed or cancelled purely because of the rise in insurance costs. The private insurance industry supported our request to extend indemnity to domestic exhibitions, because it benefits from being able to insure part of an exhibition rather than none if the exhibition does not go forward at all.

The amount that museums save in insurance fees far surpasses the total direct grants that NEA makes to museums. Last year, the savings was about \$30 million, according to AAMD's 2013 Statistical Report. Over the 38 years of the program, it has extended indemnity to about 1,200 major exhibitions and saved museums about \$375 million in insurance payments. Over the same period there have been just two claims because the program has very rigorous requirements regarding what it will insure and what procedures must be followed in terms of packing, shipping, and guarding works of art. The two claims together came to just \$104,700.

The total dollar amount of indemnity agreements for international exhibitions that can be in effect at any one time is \$10 billion. The corresponding figure for purely domestic exhibitions is \$5 billion. While these numbers sound large, two important facts must be noted. First, they do not represent actual outlays by the U.S. government; and second, individual objects can be exceedingly valuable, sometimes running into the scores of millions of dollars. As the market continues its seeming inexorable rise, the value of exhibitions rises as well.

Last year, the international indemnity program received requests to cover exhibitions worth nearly \$16 billion, while the amount requested for domestic exhibitions was nearly \$6.3 billion. Because not all exhibitions are going to be up at the same time, the program has been able to grant all qualified requests without exceeding the respective caps of \$10 billion for international and \$5 billion for domestic, but in some cases not at the full amount requested, meaning that some museums had to find private insurance or curtail their exhibitions.

Over the life of the program, Congress has consistently raised the international cap at intervals of as little as two years and as many as eight. It is now eight years since either cap was raised and we suggest that the statistics show that the time is approaching for another adjustment.

We suggest as well that the Subcommittee look into the possible benefit of lowering the threshold value of exhibitions that can be covered.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony for the record.

Association of Art Museum Directors

The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) is composed of the directors of more than 200 art museums in the United States, as well as several in Canada and Mexico. Its mission is to support its membership in fostering vibrant communities. The AAMD has been a grantee of the NEA in the past.

Contact Information:

Andrew Finch
Association of Art Museum Directors
1319 F Street, NW – Suite 201
Washington, DC 20004
afinch@aamd.org
202-638-54530

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