DANCE/USA ADVOCACY UPDATE

Thursday, January 19, 2017

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Dear Colleagues:

While Washington, DC is getting crowded with visitors for tomorrow's inauguration, Dance/USA continues to work hard on the issues that impact dance and the performing arts. Below are several updates on some of the top issues.

National Endowment for the Arts – As many have seen, The Hill reported this morning that President-Elect Trump would eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and would privatize the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in an effort to reduce federal spending. The President's budget proposal is just one piece of the process that leads to a final budget. Currently, Congress hasn't yet finalized the Fiscal Year 2017 budget, which is currently funded through a continuing resolution through April. Additionally, each year Congress releases a budget resolution, which is not binding. The Republican budget resolution has called for the elimination for the cultural agencies, even though in recent years that same Congress has not only kept the funding stable, but recently gave Dance/USA America also collaborated with many national arts service organizations to craft ***Advancing the Arts to Support National Policy Priorities***, which was provided to the President-Elect's transition team, which urged the administration to support expanded grant-making at the cultural agencies. While there isn't yet urgency to respond to this news, this is the perfect time to strengthen or build relationships with your Members of Congress and ensure that they are aware of the important ways artists and arts organizations are contributing to their communities.

Charitable Giving Incentives – Dance/USA has been working with the Charitable Giving Coalition and Independent Sector to continue to educate Congressional offices about the importanct of the charitable deduction to nonprofits. Last week, many national nonprofits met with staff leadership on the House Ways and Means Committee. The House is eager to move forward on comprehensive tax reform, however it's not likely to move as fast as they hoped. Recent blueprintsand proposals from the President-Elect have included caps on giving in addition to reducing the number of taxpayers who itemize, which could significantly impact the amount people give. Nonprofits continue to ask lawmakers to preserve the full scope and value of the charitable deduction. Should the standard deduction double, we may also ask for an expansion of the deduction to also include non-itemizers. CGC sent a letter to the President-Elect urging him to exempt the charitable sector from caps on deductions. Additionally, CGC is coordinating a charitable deduction Hill Day, February 15 and 16, honoring the 100 years that the deduction has been included in the tax code. If your senators or representative sits on the Senate Finance Committee or the House Ways and Means Committee and you would like to attend, please let me know.

Arts in Education – Dance/USA is represented on the advisory committee for the Arts Education Partnership, a policy organization funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Arts. This organization, which is hosted by the Education Commission of the States, is working to create state level advocacy tools to support the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act and to support advocacy efforts towards funding arts programs in schools and school partnerships with arts organizations.

Arts Advocacy Day – Once again, Dance/USA serves as a National Partner for Arts Advocacy Day, March 20 and 21. As a national partner, Dance/USA is represented on the Legislative Planning Committee and works with other partners to revise and update the national policy asks, which include issues such as support for the NEA, implemenation of ESSA, preservation of the charitable deducation, cultural exchange and visa issues, and support for the use of wireless microphones by performng arts organizations, among others. As soon as these briefs are published, they will be updated the advocacy page on OPERA America's website.

Action Alerts – Dance/USA will send out action alerts and updates to inform members of breaking news and urgent response. If you have any questions about the policy work, please do not hesitate to ask.