

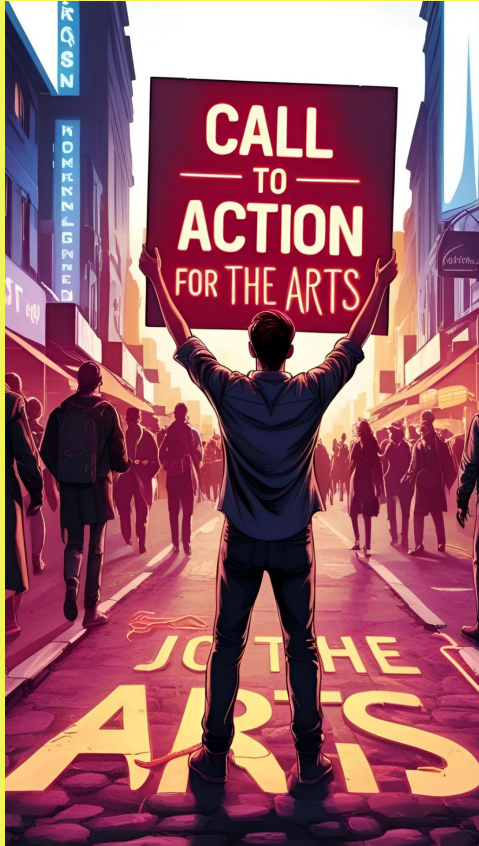
NEBRASKANS  
FOR THE  
**ARTS**



# Arts Advocacy House Call



# Agenda



## Introduction

Lance Nielsen, Nebraskans for the Arts

## Updates on NEH and HN

Chris Sommerich, Humanities Nebraska

## Updates on NEA and NAC

Mike Markey, Nebraska Arts Council

## Updates on NCE

Maggie Smith, Nebraska Cultural Endowment

## Arts Education

## Advocacy Strategies

Lance Nielsen, Nebraskans for the Arts

## Q&A



**We may encounter many  
defeats but we must not  
be defeated”**

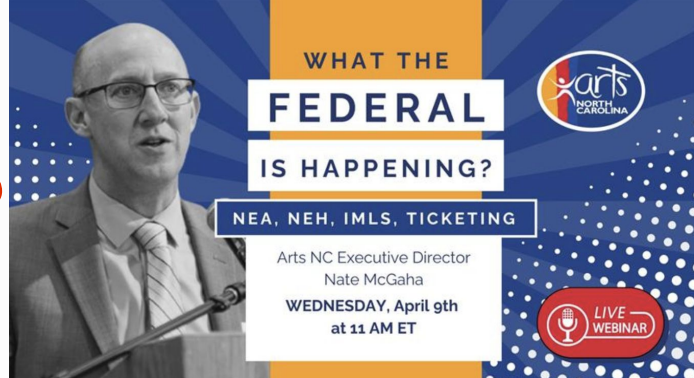
**- Maya Angelou**

# WTF! What the Federal?

*Credit to Arts NC Executive Director, Nate McGaha*

Since January 2025:

- Executive Orders focused to **drastically downsize Federal Agencies.**
- **DOGE** entering and reviewing agencies.
- **Changes in leadership** with the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts.
- **Institute of Museum and Library Services Dismantled.**  
(Lawsuits by 21 State AGs and American Library Association (ALA))





**FY25**  
**Budget**

**\$295 million**

(\$211M to State Governments for Libraries)

**% of US**  
**Budget**

**0.0046%**

**\$207 million**

(40% to nonprofit State Humanities Councils)

**0.003%**

**\$207 million**

(40% to State Arts Agencies & Regional Arts Organizations)

**0.003%**

# Rescission vs Reconciliation

**Rescission is basically a request to not spend allocated funds**

- Known targets: CPB (NPR & PBS) and US AID
- Rescission Request was expected in late April, has not been sent.
- Rescission only requires 51 votes to pass Senate (most bills need 60 for cloture)

**Reconciliation can only be used for spending, revenue, or the debt limit to pass with simple majority (51 votes in Senate) bypassing filibuster rule.**

- Reconciliation FY 2025: tax reform, debt limit, energy policy, & spending.
  - Increased spending for Defense and Border Security expected.
  - Decreased spending on other parts of the Federal Budget expected.

**President's Skinny Budget for FY 2026:**

- Eliminates NEA, NEH, IMLS, and CPB (NPR & PBS)

# Updates with NEH

April 2nd

All state humanities councils receive “notice of grant termination” emails from NEH (sent by DOGE); since then, more than 1,000 grants have been terminated and 65% of NEH staff fired.

April 11th

HN Board meets; resolves to continue with grant making and programming as planned for rest of FY25.

April 29th

Mellon Foundation announces a \$15 million emergency stabilization grant for the state humanities councils.

# Updates with NEH

## May 1st

Several academic humanities organizations file a lawsuit against DOGE & NEH in federal district court.

## May 2nd

The president announces “skinny budget” for FY2026, in which funding for NEH and NEA is eliminated.

## May 23rd

Signer deadline for House “Dear Colleague” letter seeking \$209 million in funding for NEH in FY26.



# Updates with NEA

May 1st

NEA votes to approve State Partnership Grants for State Arts Agencies.

May 2nd

The president announces “skinny budget” for FY2026, in which funding for NEA and NEH is eliminated.

May 2nd

NEA emails recent grantees that their grants were rescinded, withdrawn, or terminated.

# Oh Yea... And then there is The State Legislature

LB 445 added as Amendment to LB660  
(originally repealed 1% for Art)

Amendment 1300 to LB264  
Sweeps \$3M from CCCFF cash fund, important to Creative Districts

LB261  
Budget bill

LB 560  
(\$500,000 Grants open to Creative Districts)

# Nebraska Cultural Endowment

Cultural Endowment was established in 1998, specifically to support our state Humanities and Arts councils in case of federal defunding.

NCE funds make up around 20% of Humanities Nebraska and Nebraska Arts Council's yearly budget

- YTD 2025 NCE has granted \$569,231 to NAC
- YTD 2025 NCE has granted \$430,521 to HN
- Support of the Endowment is critical during this time of uncertainty; the larger the Endowment, the more support we can provide.

# Nebraska Cultural Endowment

NCE has raised funding independently, to create a comprehensive report on the impact of investing in arts and humanities across the entire state of Nebraska.

- Partners on this project are the research team at UNO Center for Public Affairs Research and Amplify Arts
- Research is now beginning on both qualitative reports and case studies in 5 communities across Nebraska
- Report is called the Nebraska Cultural Investment Report and we should be rolling it out in 2026

# Department of Education Arts Education

**The Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA)**—Passed in 2015, ESSA shifted the federal focus to support for a “well-rounded” education that includes music and the arts (defined as: dance, media arts, theatre, and visual arts).

*Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*

- \$36.5 million Assistance for Arts Education Grant Program;
- \$18.67 billion for Title I Part A;
- \$2.19 billion for Title II Part A;
- \$1.39 billion for Title IV Part A, Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants;
- \$1.329 billion for Title IV Part B.

**H.R.2485 - Arts Education for All Act - POSITIVE NEWS!**

Congressman Bacon is a Co-Sponsor!!



Public input survey by **May 16, 2025**

[nationalartsstandards.org/](https://nationalartsstandards.org/)



# Arts Advocacy Strategies

Start and End with Gratitude

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Position Yourself as a Resource

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Invite Lawmakers to Your Events

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# NFTA is here for you.

## Arts Advocacy Network



Nebraskans willing to build and maintain positive connections with elected officials - both State Senators and U.S. Senators and Congressmen.

(missing 22, 33, 34, 35, 39, 42, 45, 47)

## Action Center



Action Center through Quorum. This provides NFTA with a legislative tracking, action alert, and communications system. Anyone can join.

## State and National Connections



Americans for the Arts  
Creative States Coalition  
Mid-America Arts Alliance  
Nonprofit Associations of the Midlands



# NEBRASKANS FOR THE ARTS



## PROTECT THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

The NEA has cancelled or rescinded a massive amount of grants harming arts and culture in our local communities and impacting access to arts education for our children. Many of our great Nebraska arts organizations were notified of their grant being terminated late on a Friday night. These grants were supporting current and ongoing arts projects that are benefiting our communities. This action is a broken promise. Additionally, DOGE-driven staff reductions of 50 percent threaten its future operations.

The Administration's decision to diminish the NEA's capacity runs counter to their stated goal of government efficiency. That is because NEA has consistently demonstrated government efficiency on a small budget that enhances economic activity across the country. The NEA helps support a nonprofit arts sector that generated \$151.7 billion of economic activity in 2022—\$73.3 billion in spending by nonprofit arts organizations and an additional \$78.4 billion in event-related expenditures by their audiences. This economic activity supported 2.6 million jobs, provided \$101 billion in personal income to residents, and generated \$29.1 billion in tax revenue to local, state, and federal governments.

The ratio of private and other public funds, far surpasses the required non-federal match of at least 1:1. More than \$500 million annually has been generated in matching support, illustrating why federal support for the arts is uniquely valuable. NEA funding is a critical backbone of support that leverages state and local investment in the arts.

On page two of this document is a list of a few examples of the financial impact that the termination of NEA and NEH direct grants has had on Nebraska organizations. These arts organizations are fiscally responsible and build their budgets around the grant and private donor funds in order to plan their programming. When funding is removed abruptly, it impacts not only the artists, but the community who has an investment in their creative product.

It is for these reasons we urge our U.S. Elected Officials to support reinstating these lost grants and support \$209 million for the NEA in FY 2026 and \$209 million for the NEH in FY 2026.



Arts Organization	Funded	Grant Name	Grant Purpose	Status
Lincoln Music Teachers Association	\$10,000	Challenge America	To support music lessons for around 50 students who qualify for free and reduced lunch.	We have not received our funding yet, but it has been budgeted for an upcoming project.
Crane River Theater Company, Inc.	\$10,000	Grants for Arts Projects	Supporting arts education and performances at Crane River Theater.	We have not received our funding yet, but it has been budgeted for an upcoming project.
Circle Theatre	\$10,000	Challenge America	To support an inclusive production of The Wizard of Oz	We have not received our funding yet, but it has been budgeted for an upcoming project.
The Rose Theater (Omaha Theater Company)	\$15,000	Grants for Arts Projects	To support the development and production of "The Great Race," a new play for young audiences, by Wai Yim at the Rose Theater.	We have not received our funding yet, but it has been budgeted for an upcoming project.
Opera Omaha	\$25,000	Grants for Arts Projects	To support Family Opera Series performances of Fantastic Mr. Fox	We have not received our funding yet, but it has been budgeted for an upcoming project.
Omaha, Inc. (Formerly on First Friday)	\$25,000	Grants for Arts Projects	To support arts programming in the Benson Creative District in Omaha, Nebraska.	We have not received our funding yet, but it has been budgeted for an upcoming project.
Orchestra	\$10,000	Challenge America	The purpose of our grant was to support a family concert and its related educational and outreach activities.	We have not received our funding yet, but it has been budgeted for an upcoming project.
College	\$50,000	Humanities Connections	Construct a minor that encourages students to take more Humanities classes and prepares them to work in our region	We have received our funding and are using our grant for a current or upcoming project.
University of	\$25,000	Grants for Arts Projects	Support of String Sprouts Program	We have not received our funding yet, but it has been budgeted for an upcoming project.
Arts	\$40,000	Grants for Arts Projects - Music	To support the Nebraska Crossroads Music Festival	Received particle funding but has been budgeted for an upcoming project.
	\$15,000	Grants for Arts Projects - Arts Education	To support free in-school dance residencies	
Cancellation of grant letter				
	\$50,000	Grants for Arts Projects	Omnium Circus featuring a sensory-inclusive public matinee, school show, and community workshops for various abilities	We have received and completed funds have been
	\$30,000	Grants for Arts Projects	Syncoated Ladies with student matinee	Grant is done and reimbursed
	\$250,000	Museums for America grant	To support development and fabrication of new exhibits	*NOTE received notice but the grant is

**Arts Leaders SPEAK OUT about the impacts on Nebraska.**  
We are concerned about the potential trickle down impact funding changes like this will have on the large community and private funding.

We are having to decide if we will stop offering 5 classes of our program, likely impacting Rural Nebraska young people.  
Contracts made to local vendors in support of this project are being reviewed and will likely be cancelled as a result of the abrupt timing of this grant award cancellation. Local businesses will be impacted, as well as local artisans.

Unfortunately, this affects myself and another full-time staff member. Because of this, we do not know how we are getting paid after October. This limits our capacity and ability in fulfilling our mission and serving our community.

We have been hearing from peers at other performing arts organizations that the withdrawal of grant funding at this late date may cause them to make last minute changes or reductions in their upcoming programming. These changes may in turn impact whether or not community members and/or visitors choose to attend events and performances. This then becomes a larger economic issue of dollars spent in the community in conjunction with event attendance at restaurants, hotels, parking facilities, shops, etc.

The cancellation of the National Endowment for the Arts grant will greatly impact our organization. We have already seen a decrease in overall grant support and sponsorships for projects based on financial uncertainty for many foundations and businesses. As a result, we are forced to look at cutting programs and projects due to a lack of funds.

With rising costs because of inflation, limited audiences due to economic uncertainty, and now a decrease in grant support, our organization is forced to take a closer look at what we must cut in the months ahead.

Arts and culture organizations can bring communities together which is more important than ever. This funding is a very minor component of the federal budget but it has an enormous impact in communities both large and small across our state. It is especially important for the smaller organizations that serve rural populations who have limited access to other funding sources.

We are seeing a slowdown in ticket sales. People tell us they are losing jobs or fear losing them, so they are not going to the theater. We are immediately forced to make necessary large ticket item purchases in advance of the tariffs, and struggling mightily with the cost of essentials like gas and groceries.

We're already seeing reduced access to free arts programming in schools, group homes, and senior centers and especially for individuals with disabilities and those in under-resourced communities. The loss of funding like NEA support means fewer opportunities for people to engage in meaningful, empowering creative experiences. That deepens existing inequities and silences voices that deserve to be heard.

## Direct Meetings with U.S. Elected Officials

# NFTA Efforts

A number of action alerts - state and federal Zoom Calls and In Person meetings with elected officials.

Sent letter to Nebraska Attorney General Mike Hilgers expressing concerns of NEA and NEH grant rescissions.

Submitted FY 26 Appropriations Requests to Representatives Bacon, Flood, and Smith for NEA, NEH, ESSA (Title I, II, IV) and Public Media. **POSITIVE NEWS, Flood and Bacon have verbally committed to support.**

Requested both Rep. Flood and Bacon to sign on to “Dear Colleague” Letters

# Next Steps - We need you!

01 - Join the NFTA Action Center

02 - Continue the email and call campaign.

03 - Set up meetings at local offices.

04 - Encourage donors, board members, neighbors, friends, family to be involved.

05 - Attend and support arts organizations and events.  
DO ARTS! They can't kill creativity.

**JOIN NFTA**

[JOIN](#)

**ADVOCACY  
& JOIN  
ACTION  
CENTER**

[TAKE ACTION](#)

[RESOURCES](#)

**VARIOUS  
RESOURCES**

**NEBRASKA  
ARTS ACTION  
FUND**

**LEARN  
ABOUT THE  
ARTS ACTION  
FUND**

**DONATE TO  
NFTA OR  
NAAF**

# NEBRASKANS FOR THE **ARTS** 40 YEARS

*During 2025, we are celebrating 40 years of arts advocacy*





NEBRASKANS  
FOR THE  
**ARTS**

**YOUR  
VOICE  
NEEDS TO  
BE HEARD!**

**Continue to Call,  
Email, & Write your  
Elected Officials**

**HELP SAVE THE  
ARTS & HUMANITIES**

For more information,  
visit the NFTA  
Arts Action Center

**Q & A**