

Written Transcript of Webinar:

Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to the Nebraskans for the Arts Advocacy House call webinar. My name is Dr Lance Nielsen I'm the executive director for Nebraskans for the Arts and we have a large group of people, we had about 140 people register for this webinar today which is really exciting. We are providing accommodations for people with visual needs so as each speaker introduces themselves, we're going to describe ourselves as well. I'm an older white man male, gray short hair with glasses, I'm wearing a pink shirt blue tie, and a gray coat and my background is blurred because no one needs to see my messy office. I'm joined today with Chris Sommerich, executive director of Humanities Nebraska, Mike Marky executive director of the Nebraskan Arts Council, and Maggie Smith executive director of Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

The purpose of today's webinar is to give you updated information with regard to the changes happening at the federal level and give you some updates on what's going on in the state as well, can't forget about what's going on at the state, and provide you with some resources on how you can be an advocate for the arts and humanities. We need everyone's voice right now so we ask that you please reserve this opportunity to ask questions. We ask that you use the chat box as a place to post questions only, we will address those questions as we go, but we will also have a Q&A section at the end of our webinar. We'll try to answer as many questions as we can, if we don't get to all of them, we'll make sure that we get some answers and get them posted to our website a little bit later on. We are recording today's webinar and we'll get that posted on our website later this week. Our agenda for today is I'm going to do a little brief introduction to set the stage of what we're going to be talking about today and then we're going to have some updates on the National Endowment of Humanities from Chris and then we'll also move over to Mike to talk about the National Endowment of Arts and then we'll have some updates on the Nebraska Cultural Endowment from Maggie Smith. We're going to cover all three of those areas and then I'll come back on and we'll do a little recap of what's going on in arts education and how we can support there and we want to give you some of the advocacy strategies that Nebraskans for the Arts has tried to develop to help support your work and how you can support us. Then we'll end as I said with a little question and answer time at the end.

I've used this phrase many times that advocacy is a wellness program and not an emergency room visit and we probably all feel right now that we've been run over by the ambulance. Regardless, we do have supporters of the arts at both the state and federal levels among our elected officials and we will continue to build those bridges, foster positive relationships, and keep our focus on what is important and that is arts and humanities for all. I love this quote by Maya Angelo that sometimes we have some defeats but that does not mean we're defeated. Before we get going here, I wanted to share a few little things just to kind of set the stage. I love this title and I can't take credit for it. He is a cohort of mine, Nate McGee of Arts North Carolina executive director. He does a webinar almost every month called "WTF What the Federal is going on" and he has been a great resource for many of us. He's also co-chair with the Creative States Coalition which we are associated with and he does a great job of reviewing what's going on and giving us those updates. I'm just going to kind of set the stage a little bit of what's been going on and before we get into these deeper conversations, as we know there's been a number of executive orders that have been going on since January that have really focused on drastically downsizing the size of the federal agencies.

Doge you've heard a lot about in the news has been entering and reviewing these agencies and making not only recommendations but actually actions quite quickly on how these agencies are working. We've also seen changes in leadership with Kennedy Center for Performing Arts we've seen just a change of how we're going to approach arts and culture in our country and so that's been a little bit of the focus. We've been paying attention to what's going on there and then in the middle of March the Institute of Museum and Library Services was really the first big cultural agency that got dismantled and that kind of started to set the stage for a lot of the other things that we started to see. I do want to point out since that time, there were 21 lawsuits by state attorney generals and also by the American Library Association. The court cases are actually starting and we're starting to see some of the positive ramifications in one way or the other on that front with the Institute of Museum and Library Services. On May 1st one of the judges issued a temporary restraining order on the American Library Association which was positive and then earlier last week we had a preliminary injunction based on the 21 state AG's lawsuit. What that means is we're starting to see that the court systems are really saying "Wait a minute, stop." They're looking at justifications for eliminating programs and how these grants are being terminated, how this implementation of large scale employee rifts are happening and they're stopping it and saying "wait a minute we're not really following the process. Those are some positive things from the court side and that's where a lot of this is going to end up. I think there's some templates being created that's going to maybe help with the National Endowment of Humanities who's got a number of court cases or lawsuits in preparation and we're also going to see that with the arts as well.

I think this is good to keep in mind as well that when we look at budgets in each of these areas look at humanities and arts we're 0.003% of the overall budget and so when they look at wanting to totally eliminate, we're so small but we have make a huge impact when it comes to economic vitality. I think these are always some good talking points to have and I also want to talk a little bit about the difference between rescission versus reconciliation. You've heard these terms probably a lot when you've been watching the news. Rescission is basically when there's a request to not spend all the allocated funds and the president can do that but the proper way of doing that is the President submits a request to Congress, then Congress makes the decision on the rescission request. There was supposed to be one expected at the end of April that really focused in on NPR and PBS and USAID, but didn't really happen and I heard this morning that it may finally show up this week so that's something we want to kind of keep an eye on. It only requires 51 votes in the Senate for a rescission to happen but it's got to go through the process which we haven't really been seeing quite yet. We are also hearing now with the budget of FY2025, just as a reminder the US government's fiscal year starts on October 1, it's now May so now they're looking at reconciliation and it's really going to be focused on spending, revenue or debit and debit limit. Again only requires a simple majority so it bypasses that filibuster rule.

We're hearing this is really going to be the focus right now in the next couple months and then a week ago the President sent out a skinny budget looking forward to FY 2026. It is not any different from his first term which really announces that he wants to eliminate NEA NEH IMLS NPR and PBS. Not any different from what we saw earlier in his first term but it's again something we wanted to be focusing on and we're having these conversations now which we'll talk a little bit a little later on, with our senators and representatives saying no we need this. We're putting requests in for FY 2026 already.

At this time I'd like to turn this over to Chris, Chris if you want to introduce yourself and describe yourself and take it away.

Thank you Lance, that was a great introduction. Hey everyone, I'm Chris Sommerich, I'm executive director of Humanities Nebraska and I was joking with Lance a little bit earlier because we were making some office visits earlier today that my purple shirt kind of went well with his pink shirt as a fellow middle-aged white guy a little bit taller than Lance I would say but he's a little better looking I've been executive director with Humanities Nebraska for 14 years and with the organization for 20 and this is certainly the biggest moment of crisis I think for the arts and culture and humanities world politically speaking or financially speaking. The state humanities councils, just as a quick broad snapshot, are all nonprofit organizations across the country and all the state partners with the national endowment for the humanities just like the arts councils as state agencies are with the national Endowment for the Arts. NEH and NEA have both been around since 1965 and Nebraska Arts Council and Humanities Nebraska both around since 1973, we're both over 50 years old now and for all that time we have been working to serve the needs of our state. In Nebraska we're very proud of the working relationship we have together. I'm very grateful to Nebraskans for the Arts and Nebraska Arts Council for pulling Humanities Nebraska in on this sort of joint work together to communicate about the importance of what's happening and what everybody can do about it. I was at a meeting with all the state humanities council directors going back to April 2nd as you can see on the slide received those infamous I guess notices of grant termination emails that have been hitting all throughout the country and different agencies and so forth. About a thousand or so of those went out to NEH grantees but all the state humanities councils were informed that our operating grants with NEH were terminated immediately. Again this is something that these grants have been operational for 50 some years and have generally had bipartisan support. I think that all, regardless of the side of the aisle our congressional representatives are on, they see and most of them have seen the efficiency and effectiveness of state councils like us working. You know to serve our states and get out throughout the states into smaller communities, rural areas as well as urban areas so this was quite a shock. You know not not completely unexpected I guess in the sense that we knew Doge was visiting NEH but the suddenness of that and you know the elimination of 65 to 80% of NEH staff being let go immediately too over the a period of a couple weeks, so that was the initial shock and all the councils have been on the humanities side have been working to you know assess our ability to continue our missions and support local organizations throughout our states. I think in Nebraska we have one of the best working relationships with our state arts council. There are certainly others and right now we're all working as hard as we can together. There's overlap in arts and humanities grantees. You know a lot of you arts organizations get humanities grants for different aspects of what you do and then in the humanities side we also you know do a lot of things across history and literature and other areas as well I would say that in our end because we're a nonprofit we do get some state appropriation funding but the other amazing thing that we have in Nebraska that you'll hear more about in a minute from Maggie Smith is the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. We are very grateful that because of the Cultural Endowment and the working relationship with the arts council and the state of Nebraska and private donors we're committed to continuing our mission and our grant making and our programming as much as possible going forward. Through the rest of this fiscal year and then beyond that just make the decisions with our board and staff on what kind of cuts might need to happen as we get into next fiscal year but there's a lot of work being done across the humanities sector similar to the arts.

Appeal to the congressional delegation and to members of Congress to reassert their authority, their budgetary authority and basically get a reset for FY26 hopefully and the funding that can come through. Congress can designate to the arts councils and the humanities councils through NEH and NEA. One of the pieces that's going to help us bridge that is the Mellon Foundation just a little over a week ago announced a \$15 million emergency stabilization grant for humanities councils that will help councils especially those that have been really reliant on federal money to keep the doors open and keep operating. Even if they do have to make some cuts until we can work through the congressional process again here in Nebraska with private support and the cultural endowment and everything we are committed to doing as much as we can to continue on with our grant making and our programming. I want to encourage people to if you're interested in humanities grants and just kind of get into deeper dive in this on this Thursday at noon our grant staff team is going to do an online office hour. You can go to humanities.nebraska.org or and sign up for that but noon central time this Thursday May 15th where we'll talk a little bit about our grant opportunities and the NEH situation and kind of things for you to think about as you and your local organizations are thinking how to piece together funding. If you feel your funding's at risk or if you've lost any and we'll just all keep working together i feel strongly maybe I'm naively optimistic but I feel strongly that if we keep having our voices heard and keep pushing at this that we will be able to move the needle back and into into a more reasonable place where the amazing cultural infrastructure we've built across the our state and the country can continue for everybody's benefit. I just want to mention a couple last things, Lance mentioned the lawsuit on the IMLS side there is one in for NEH that has been filed by several large national humanities organizations more on the academic side and it is really illuminating to read that and how Doge went about its work being I mean clearly illegal and just complete disregard for the laws and policies and the proper procedures for doing things. So I think we just need the time for that legal process to go through and time for us to keep working on Congress to restore the right and correct process to determine funding. Lance already mentioned the skinny budget for NEH and NEA and I will just finally mention that there is a dear colleague letter circulating the house right now for the humanities side. There was one that just closed for the arts but on the humanities side it's open till May 23rd so if you feel moved to contact your members of Congress and ask them to sign on it's asking for \$209 million for NE similar to the one that was for NEA and restoring the funding for this the humanities councils. So I think that'll cover, I'll save any other comments for if there's any questions as we go on but thank you so much Lance and I'll hand it back to you.

All right thank you Chris, we'll turn this over to Mike Marky.

Thank you Lance, yeah I I first of all want to thank Lance and Nebraskans for the Arts to putting this together and if you do not already belong to Nebraskans for the Arts I strongly encourage you to look at, what they're doing for us and what they will be doing in the years to come. So please take a look at their website and how you can be part of what they do. I also want to thank Chris and Maggie for being part of this today and for all their work that we've done together, we're a pretty tight group and I think that's not typical in every state of the union so I think we're pretty happy with the way that we work together. I want to spend my time with you today talking first about the federal and then I'll bring you up to date with what's going on in our state and when it comes to the federal I want to clarify the different types of funding that we get here in the state of Nebraska from the NEA. By law 40% of the monies that come from the NEA has to go to the state arts agencies and the territories and I will address that amount of money in a minute.

The more dire right now is the other 60% that goes for administration and for the direct grants and those are the funds that were affected by the cancellations recently on May 2nd and those are those grants that were made in several different categories. But to organizations here in the state about 24 different organizations were granted and then the cancellation letters were sent out to at least 15 of them that we've confirmed and that represents about \$500,000 that's not coming to our state anymore. Some of these grants were for programs and projects that have already occurred reimbursement grants. Now those organizations are having to scramble to try to fill in the blanks on that loss to those grants and as we learn more about those we find out more and more about the effects of those grants on those organizations. As Lance already alluded to we are working with the local representatives congressional and senators to avail them of the situation and the impacts on those organizations so that they can take action at the federal level. Those grants are still being looked at at the federal level and hopefully with some support from folks like you we can turn that table around and get some of those restored but that has yet to be said. As Lance said a lot of that's probably going to take place in the courts, that's the direct grants I wanted to let you know about. The 40% that comes to the state arts agency as of May 1st those were approved by the council and Doge has now left the NEA and so we are assured that our funding for the coming year that 40% the state agencies will be receiving so what does that mean for the state of Nebraska our federal funds that come from the NEA represents 26% of our budget and those funds are used for projects and programs throughout the state in fact they have their greatest impact in cities outside of Omaha and Lincoln. 61% of our funds goes to those grants outside of Omaha and Lincoln and so they really have an important impact on the greater Nebraska communities and they fund things like community concerts and uh community projects art projects murals things like that things that make a difference to the entire community that then raise money and making those communities a better place to live so those funds are very important. So those should be safe for the coming year now. The final component then is as was discussed before on May 2nd the President released his skinny budget and he calls for the elimination of NEA and NEH funding so we've got some work to do. I think it's heartening that many at the congressional level are in favor of restoring those funds at the levels they were and so we work from that standpoint and as we mentioned we've already begun talking to our representatives about the importance of that funding going forward so that will continue to be a battle for us all summer long as we continue to inform them of that.

And then at the state level just to give you an idea that there is an awful lot going on at the present time and this is all a snapshot, it's all a very fluid situation but this year some of the important things that I just wanted to give you a quick update. ON LB445 was going to try to get rid of the 1% for art program in the state and we had a lot of work to do with the legislature. And I can tell you that bill which is now LB660 is one step away from being passed with an amendment that restores the 1% for art programs. But it'll have a few adjustments but 1% for art will be a continued program for the state of Nebraska for now. The budget is a big concern and that's what the legislators are working on as we speak. As you know, they had a sizable deficit to make up and that affected a lot of different things, one of the ways that they looked to make up the deficit was by sweeping a lot of cash funds. One of the cash funds that was targeted was what's called the civic and community center financing fund or the CCCFF. That's an important fund because our creative districts use that as a way of being able to get a lot of the projects and planning projects done in their communities. Last year, it was earmarked for the creative districts and more than \$5 million went to those communities.

This year they've already awarded the grants and nine more communities received \$3 million so it's a very important fund. They are looking to sweep 1.5 million each year for the next two years from that which will severely limit the amount of grants that can come out of that program and that looks like that will continue to be in the LB264. We've not been able to get that swept out of there yet so but we continue to work on that we're not done yet the budget bill then 261 advanced one more step today and in that is our appropriation for our agency and I can let you know that there is a small increase to our agency appropriation which in light of the deficit in light of what's happened to a lot of other agencies is really good news. They did not take any of the funding for the creative districts from our appropriation. Now the bad news is that we asked for additional funding for the creative districts and it doesn't appear as though that's going to be in the final budget. Now the final good news though is LB560 was a bill put forward by Senator Dunan and it frees up some cash funds from the folks at tourism for tourism grants that can be applied for by the creative districts and so it's very close to being passed so that would be an additional \$500,000 for those communities to be able to see some of their marketing and project budgets increased for those communities. That is my update. Oh the only thing I want to mention is that as we continue our work towards making sure that the NEA is in the budget in FY26, it becomes more and more obvious that the work that the cultural endowment does is going to be increasingly important for this. That's the reason it was created in the first place in case everything ever happened to the federal funds so we always applaud the work of the cultural endowment as that backs up our funding here in the state and so with what Maggie Smith is about to tell you is very important for the arts and humanities in the state. I will hand it back to Lance

Thank you Mike, that was great and as you mentioned sometimes we have some little wins along the way so we got to we got to celebrate those so at this time. I'm gonna turn it over to Maggie Smith.

Hi everyone, I'm Maggie Smith. I'm the director of the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. I am a white woman. I'm wearing glasses and I have brown hair and a bright pink shirt today. I'm seeing a lot of familiar faces so I'm sort of assuming most of the folks on this call are familiar with the cultural endowment but in case you are not the endowment was established in 1998 and the the purpose of the endowment was to create a firm support in our state for humanities and the arts councils in case of federal defunding. That being said, without that risk over the past 27 years the cultural endowment has grown and we're currently altogether getting very close to a \$40 million endowment. And over the past 27 years we have dispersed to both the Arts Council and Humanities Nebraska close to \$20 million over the past 27 years in the past year we have dispersed to the humanities council close to a half a million dollars, same with the Nebraska Arts Council. Our entire existence is to create stability within our state around funding programs across Nebraska. It was decided early on that the Arts Council would not create its own grant giving within its organization because we understood that we trust and believe in the scope of both of these incredibly important organizations who have been around for 50 years and we give the money to them through the earnings from the endowment every year and they do an amazing job of making sure that those funds are dispersed to programs organizations artists all across the state. With that in mind at a time like this we do make up about 20% of both of these organizations budget in terms of what we give to them every year so it's even more important right now in a time of trouble that the endowment exists and obviously the support we can provide is all the more critical right now.

We certainly hope that all of this turns around but as long as we're here which is extremely unusual in most states in the United States to have this kind of endowment, we know that we can at least offer them some sort of relief as we move forward so you can move ahead. Lance to the next slide. One thing I did want to really mention is that we feel like at the end it's very important part of our job is to show the folks of Nebraska who have been supportive and investing in arts and culture and in the endowment both the state legislature and private donors we want to be able to show the impact that these kind of donations and this kind of support has on arts and culture across Nebraska. So we actually raised funding independently to create a comprehensive report on the impact of investing in arts and humanities across the entire state of Nebraska. There have been similar studies done but they've been geographically isolated certain areas this would be a statewide report that has not been done before. We have partnered on this project with the research team at UNO's center for public affairs research as well as amplified arts and the actual research is now beginning. We're doing qualitative reports and quantitative reports and we are doing case studies in five communities across Nebraska in a variety of different small and large communities to show the success that these communities have had both economically in terms of job growth in terms of retaining youth health and wellness in their communities. Once there has been an investment in arts humanities and culture in their communities, we're calling the report the Nebraska Cultural Investment Report and unfortunately it's not ready for everyone right now which I really wish it was but we are going to be rolling that out in 2026. We have pulled together a list of folks across Nebraska who are on the ground advocating for and creating amazing arts humanities and cultural events and programs and organizations across Nebraska to create what we're calling an engagement panel that hopefully once the research is done is going to help us understand the best way to use this data and all this information and these case studies that we're creating and create tools for folks in every community in Nebraska to take to their state local municipalities donors communities and say "Here's why it's really important that the arts and humanities are funded in our communities." It isn't just a nice to have it actually creates and stimulates so much growth in so many areas. I will ask you all to be patient we will be rolling out a lot more information on this later this year and into 2026 and hopefully have some really important things that all of you can use to advocate for your arts and humanities and culture in your communities so hang in there. We're coming and we're really excited about what we're going to be able to provide. Everyone on this call I assume knows already the importance of that impact what we're trying to do is create something for the folks that don't necessarily buy into that or think that arts and culture and humanities are nice to have so that we can approach them and say "No it actually makes a huge difference in our community." So that is something I'm excited about and I want you all to know about and it is coming very soon. And with that Lance I'll pass it on to you all right.

Thank you Maggie. yeah we are very excited about this project i think it's going to really help us moving forward and with all our advocacy work and again how fortunate we are to be the state that has a cultural endowment in place. So thank goodness for those people back in 1998 for being "forward thinking" so excellent and some of those people are probably on this call so thank you for those of you. All right, i'm going to give you a little bit of a recap of what's going on with the Department of Education and Arts Education. As you know the Department of Education is another target by the administration and looking at just eliminating it. Back in 2015 we were very excited because we had the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The every student succeeds act is what came out of that and what was great about this is because in federal law for the first time we had specific language that states a focus on well-rounded education.

That includes music visual arts theater media arts dance - that was great and so we want to keep that focus on there and I think I saw Clay Blackman on here, he's with Nebraska Music Education Association and I'm going to be joining them in another month and we'll be in DC advocating for this and all the other things we've just talked about. But in that we're we're looking at for appropriations money in each of these areas, Title I, II, and IV, this is all support that goes back to the school or to states and in this is money for the arts and arts education. Now we're going to see how this all plays out if they totally do shut down a Department of Education, we're hearing that they're not going to take away this money, they're just going to move these things to different agencies. I just foresee this to be the biggest problem is now our individual department of educations, they go to one Department of Education, they've already have relationship with the people they talk to. With this now, this is going to be like splintered and you know you're going to be jumping around to all kinds of different agencies to maybe get answers to their questions, so that's going to be just kind of an interesting thing to kind of follow. Here's another positive news, we got to keep the positive news going - there was an arts education for all act by Rep. Boninacci, She presented this HR 2485 just an act to support the importance of arts education and our Congressman Bacon is a co-sponsor of that. So we have actually just had a a call today earlier today, Mike, Chris and I did a Zoom call with one of his legislative aids and so we talked about everything we just talked about, but we also said thank you for being on that Act as a co-sponsor - so again some positive news going on here and I'm just going to put this little plug out the National Coalition for Art Standards. This is a public review i know we have a number of arts educators that are on the call today, if you haven't done this maybe take a real quick snap of that QR code or just simply go to nationalartsstandards.org and you have till this Friday to give some input on the national arts standards. That's for anybody you don't have to be an arts educator. If you do work with schools or have been involved with arts ed. and some curriculum writing, we encourage you to complete it.

At this time I want to kind of just walk through some things that you can do to help support and advocate. I know a lot of you have already been doing this and we just want to continue to expand on some things. We always want to remember, we want to start and end with grace, we want to show gratitude, we want to say thank you for your service. I know sometimes we just kind of want to pull into a room and scream "what are you doing" but they are all just wonderful human beings and trying to do the best that they can. We've had a couple conversations earlier today that I thought were very positive. From our perspective we have to kind of keep at it that also you need to position yourself as the expert, you're the resource you need to bring the information about how the arts and culture and humanities is impacting your communities. And now that we're leading into the summer and end of June going through July, they're on recess, they're all going to be back in the State here. Wow we need to be inviting our elected officials even the state senators - get them invited to all the wonderful events that happen over the summer. We want them to see how this is impacting our community so get those invitations going.

Here's what Nebraskans for the Arts is doing. We're here for you. Here are some of the things that we've been working on and some ways we can get you involved as well. We've been working really hard on our arts advocacy network, this is where we are trying to have a representative from each of our 49 state legislative districts. So we're looking at our state senators here and we're really close. We're only missing these districts 22 33 34 35 39 42 45 and 47. I believe that's Bellevue, maybe West Elkhorn and then North Platte, Sydney and those areas so if you know anybody or if you're in that area and want to be a part of our arts advocacy network, please join.

The idea is that we have a representative that is always there building positive relationships especially with their state senator. Even though we're wrapping up in the next few weeks of this year's session, what we do from now to the end of the year until next January is so very valuable. That's why that network is important. We have the new action center which I'm going to show you here in a little bit and ways we've been using that as our tracking system and action alert system and I also want to just again recognize our AFTA connections. At the national level we have Americans for the Arts which I am an advocacy chair for the state, so we meet once a month. We have the Creative States Coalition, We've been meeting every two weeks it seems like lately, but wonderful people sharing ideas. We have Mid America Arts Alliance, I think I saw Margaret on here so thanks to Margaret for all her support and of course we have the Nonprofit Association for the Midlands, we're part of that organization too. So lots of things that we're connecting with.

After the grants were rescinded on the 2nd of May, we went to work and tried to capture who all got letters, what did we lose as far as money, and started to kind of create the story so we created a report here and, with the two meetings we actually had today, Chris joined me we had a meeting with the legislative aid in Rickett's office here in Lincoln this morning as well, we shared this report and it was great because he has some questions. He wants even more information so the data is great but I also think the stories are really important, how it's impacting your community so that's something that you really want to be involved in. So again, a lot of the action alerts we've been doing, we also sent on behalf of Nebraskans for the Arts we sent a letter to the Nebraska Attorney General Mike Hilgars. You saw earlier that there are 21 states that have created the lawsuits. Well those are all probably your blue states and are we not expecting our attorney general to be a part of a lawsuit, but he needs to be aware of the impact that's happening. So that was really the purpose of that letter and incidentally that letter went out two days before we knew about the NEA grants so I could send another letter. We've also submitted and I know Chris did this on the behalf of NEH but one of the things we try to do on behalf of Nebraska is we send an appropriation request to our representatives not only did we do NEA and NEH but we did the ESSA as well the arts education act and we included public media as well. Some positive news again, let's keep the positive stuff going on. We have heard from Flood and Bacon that they have committed to support these appropriations specifically NEA and NEH so that's great. We did ask them to sign on to the dear colleague letter. NEA wrapped up on Friday so I don't think we got either one of them on the letter so we'll keep working on the NEH. We'll hopefully get their name on there.

Next steps, here's where we need you. We would love to have you join the Nebraskans for the Arts Action Center which I'm going to show you here in just a little bit i know a number of you have been doing emails and the call campaign and I do hear from people going I'm a little frustrated i send an email and I get a form letter or I don't hear anything or I call and I get a a voicemail and have to leave a voicemail. I know that can be frustrating but we can't stop. We got to keep doing it, they are I think hearing us and so we just need to keep that going. Set up meetings at your local offices kind of like what we were doing today. I'm going to show you a template we're going to give you. And encourage your donors, board members, neighbors, friends, cats, dogs, get them all involved and if anything if they don't feel comfortable contacting and writing stories, sharing with you stories and also just getting out there. And the last thing here, I just can't emphasize this enough we need to be attending and supporting arts organizations events summer is such a busy time we need to be out there and we need to DO ARTS - they're trying to kill creativity, we're not going to let them so we need to be really really involved in order to send a clear message.

So how do you do all this? Go to our website Nebraskansforthearts.org

On the main page homepage, you'll see all these little buttons and if you're not a member and you'd like to join Nebraska for the Arts, we'd love to have you part of our team. We do try to get a membership newsletter once a month so we can keep you informed with everything that's going on. There is a take action we have some resources and uh the Nebraska Arts Action Fund I'm going to explain that a little bit that's a sister organization that is a 501c4. The difference between a C4 and C3 is a C4 can be a little bit more on the political side if we need to be. But we do have that and you know we love to have support there as well. Here's our homepage so again if you were to go to the Nebraskan Arts Action Fund button we do have just our own little page there giving you some information. There's sometimes some things that we are kind of limited on what we can share as far as Nebraskans for the Arts being a C3 but I can share it being a C4 so sometimes you'll maybe see some things and especially around election time, we will probably post some things here too. So just that's how that works.

The resources page if you were to go that, we do try to provide a little advocacy blog kind of giving you some information about advocacy, At the bottom you'll see a lot of resources we try to keep updated here as well as far as economic data, arts education data project is listed here and research that we come across that is very helpful.

I'm going to take this all the way back to the homepage here's where I want to take you to the Nebraska Arts Advocacy Network TAKE ACTION, if you go here and this is where I'll be posting our webinar video today but here's where we try to keep you update with everything that's going on with advocacy and we've embedded the action center in here. So you can kind of see it here or you can click on this button and just go right to the website of our action center and this is where we want you to be really involved. You might even want to go here and then bookmark this and come back to it as often as you want. On the front page here we give you some information, here's a breaking news updates timeline that's presented by the Americans for the Arts it's really great to kind of see where things are happening at the federal updates, here is Nate's stuff I showed you earlier he has an update every few weeks he sends that out i'm linking it here so you can see it as well. Scroll down a little bit further and we have specific contacts if you click on the contacts for US Congress, I've just created a spreadsheet here so you have all of their local offices information their website their art staffer who's the person you're going to contact if you're going to just call them say "Hey I want to talk to Ted." and then also committees the are on. And then you just click on that on here the the different tabs so references. If you click here you're just going to become a part of our advocacy network love to have you join and then we have a number of action alerts and some of you have already participated in. We'll continue to change these as we go - this one really is just very general and it's arts and education funding under attack here are some things you can do. I mentioned that it would be great to have people start going to local offices because we can send a lot of emails and calls, but I think they need to start seeing our faces and so if you're willing to do this we've created a little description here and right here is a template. If you can click on that we've just given you the template of how you could do this. I would recommend maybe just two or three of you can go, or by yourself if you want, but if you want someone to go with you I would probably not bring more than four people. I think that gets to be a little overwhelming but find someone you be the lead person you'd be the leader i've given you some instructions contact the senator's website get a meeting request say "Hey we're we'd like to go to the Kearney office of Senator Fischer, they can set that up get it scheduled contact the people going to go with you.

Really the purpose of the meeting is to talk about everything we just talked about NEA and NEH funding cuts, the ramifications on the community, if there were two or three asks you know we were asking them to help at least from their standpoint at least ask questions and help us restore that NEA and NEH funding that was terminated, also supporting the FY26 appropriations, both for NEA and NEH and for ESSA for arts education. I gave you all that information most importantly tell your story that's an important thing. They need to start seeing our faces so that's one thing you can do. We have been collecting stories too, you can do that here's some more information here's some resources. We also have this if you're writing to Congress, some of you may have already done this if you don't have a lot of time. We've written one for you. You can send this, I will say these types of things and you may have done these not just with us but with Americans for the Arts has one, I know Humanities has one, there's a whole bunch of organizations that have these action alerts - easy to fill out emails. I'm not sure if they're always effective because they kind of end up being the same. I've actually used AI here so every time you would pull this up something different should show up, the main information is the same but it's crafted a little bit differently but I really encourage you to hit the little pencil down in the bottom right and edit it, put your own story in there before you send it out or better yet just write your own email and send it directly to them. Or write a letter to send, I think that will be even more effective and then if you want to make a phone call, we've also given you some references here and we also have given you a little script if you want to have a script to follow. Again you can adapt this and include your own story so again we're trying to give you as many different resources to do this work. We'll continue to add more things here. The last thing I will just say about this at the top here, there's a lot of other things you can look at some of the events we've got going on but something that would be really helpful for any interaction that you have you email you call, you have a meeting you hear back from someone and they say something either send me an email say here's how our meeting went or I sent this email and I got this response or come in here and log an interaction. This is sometimes the easiest way because we like to know how these interactions are working. So like today we had a couple meetings. I'm going to go in here and write it in. We had a meeting, I'll mark that and then I'll put in here some notes about how that meeting went. That really is helpful for us so we can see how all this is working um from our perspective so again there's some ways that you can be involved in our advocacy [work.It](#) is going to take everybody's efforts as we get through this so at this time We'll just open this up to checking on some Q&A

Here's a question, are we incorporating Nebraska public media in our efforts? I have not reached them. Chris or Mike, have you reached out to have conversations with them. (Chris) As part of efforts we have a larger conversation going on with them and so this is certainly part of it but we've they've got their grant coming up so they're willing to listen to us and we've been staying in touch with them too. I was just with a number of them out in western Nebraska last week you know as I mentioned in the chat they have a little bit different you know their funding goes through a different I think a different subcommittee of Congress and just a little bit different process so you know it's not exactly aligned with NEA and NEH the process that NEA and NEH and IMLS go through but clearly a lot of overlap in the constituents that believe in the support of and supporting public media as well as arts and humanities. So it's good to keep communicating with each other. Mike here's a question for you at this time do you anticipate Nebraska Arts Council basic support grants being affected. (Mike) no first of all we use state funds for the basic support grants and as I said at the present time our state funding looks like it will remain at the same level it was and our federal funding our state that that we get from the NEA shouldn't be affected so our granting picture for the coming year should be what it is at the present time well.

With that I want to thank everyone for joining us today and know that we're all in this together and know that as it was mentioned earlier we are so fortunate, in Nebraska to have a working relationship between humanities and arts council and the cultural endowment, we are working together which as Mike mentioned, when you talk to other states that's not always the case. So we're very fortunate and I think that just makes us a little bit more stronger when it comes to advocacy. Thank you - get out there - share the the good news of why the arts and humanities are a crucial aspect of our communities and we'll keep fighting for you - Thank you again for joining us today