

## April 2026 Arts Advocacy Update Newsletter

Nebraskans for the Arts (NFTA) is your arts advocacy organization.

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Here is what we have included for you in this month's newsletter:

- Nebraska State Legislature Ends Short Session
  - Advocacy at the Federal Level
  - Primary Elections
  - Arts Education Professional Learning Materials
  - America 250 Commission
  - Join Nebraskans for the Arts Today!
  - Thanks to our sponsors
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### Legislature Short Session Ends



The 109th Legislative Short Session will come to a close on Friday, April 17. This session was defined largely by budget pressures and their impact on Nebraska's arts and cultural infrastructure. Lawmakers moved to address a significant state deficit through LB 1071 and LB 1072, but we also saw some small wins along the way within the arts and culture sector.

#### **LB778**

- Gives municipalities that partner with a certified creative district preference when awarding grants under the Civic and Community Center Financing Act from July 1, 2027, through June 30, 2028. The bill passed (49-0), and we are waiting for a signature from the Governor.

#### **LB1071**

- The Main Budget Bill intended to address a projected budget deficit that began at \$471 million at the start of the 60-day legislative session and grew to more than \$646 million after updated economic forecasts were released in late February.

#### **LB1072**

- This partner bill was passed with a sweep of \$5 Million. This was a temporary win, given that the initial request was to sweep the entire \$15 million.

- The bill did include language to extend the transfer of funds (\$1 million each year, scheduled to resume in FY27-28) from the General Fund to the Nebraska Cultural Endowment Fund for two additional years, through 2032.
- There was also \$100,000 being swept from the 1% for Art Maintenance Fund. This will harm the future of maintaining the existing public art in our state.

Despite a \$5 million sweep from the Cultural Preservation Endowment Fund and \$100,000 from the 1% for Art Maintenance Fund—jeopardizing care for Nebraska’s public art—Nebraskans for the Arts and Nebraska Arts Council remain committed to restoring lost appropriations. Stay engaged and be ready to support long-term arts advocacy across Nebraska. The important work happens when the legislature is not in session.

## Advocacy at the Federal Level



### FEDERAL ADVOCACY

The FY27 Appropriations process is underway at the Federal Level. NFTA submitted appropriation requests for NEA, NEH, IMLS, and arts education funding.

The President’s proposed “skinny budget” includes measures that threaten the future of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the federal infrastructure that supports arts education through the U.S. Department of Education. Refer to the April [NFTA Advocacy Blog](#).

Dr. Nielsen, Executive Director of NFTA, will be in Washington, D.C. next week, April 19-21, 2026, meeting with all of our elected officials.

### What Can Advocates Do To Help?

Reach out to your Nebraska U.S. Senators and Representatives this weekend or early next week!



**Personal stories matter more than form letters.  
Tell your story on how federal arts and humanities funding  
has impacted your school, organization, or community.**

We urge Congress to:

- Oppose elimination of the NEA and NEH
- Stand with bipartisan support of federal arts and humanities appropriations
  - We are asking for \$213 Million for both NEA and NEH for FY27
- Support funding for a well-rounded education
  - \$40 Million to fund the U.S. DOE Assistance for Arts Education.
  - \$18.68 Billion to fund Title I-A, helping all students, especially those in low-income arts education.

- \$3 Billion to fund Title II-A, supporting professional development of all well-rounded educators, including arts educators.
- \$1.6 Billion to support the Student Support & Academic Enrichment Grants under Title IV, Part A, reinforcing a well-rounded education that includes the arts.
- \$2.09 Billion to fund Title IV Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers, providing academic enrichment opportunities during out-of-school hours.

For more information and other talking points, visit the NFTA Action Alert Center.

[NFTA Action Alert Center - Take Action Now!](#)

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## Election Center

This is an election year, and the Nebraska Primary is coming up on Tuesday, May 12. Early voting and vote-by-mail are available at this time.

Know your voting rights and obligations.

Get to know the candidates who are running.

**Nebraska Arts Action Fund** will provide more information about candidates after the primary.



[Go to the Election Center](#)

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## NFTA Education Committee Develops Resources

The Nebraskans for the Arts Education Committee is proud to announce the development of a new America 250 unit study, *A Sense of Belonging*. This curriculum is designed to help students explore how, over the past 250 years, artists in America have used their creative work to express identity, celebrate community, and document the diverse experiences of people—helping shape a shared sense of belonging across time, cultures, and places.

These unit resources will be available free of charge to K–12 dance, music, visual art, and theater educators this summer. A supporting summer webinar series will also be offered to help teachers bring the materials into their classrooms and creative spaces. Arts educators are warmly invited to participate and join this important statewide learning opportunity.

Please refer to the **Nebraskans for the Arts** Website for more information. We are hoping for a release date by the first of June.

# A Sense of Belonging

About the Project

Enduring Understanding

Students will understand that for the past 250 years, artists in America have used their work to express identity, celebrate community, and document the diverse experiences of people, helping shape a shared sense of belonging across time, cultures, and places.



## NFTA Sponsors America 250 Commission

1776 - 2026 SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

### America 250: Honoring the Legacy of Community Bands and Local Art

Celebrating the enduring spirit of our nation through the music, history, and community pride of Nebraska's town bands.



In 1976, during the United States Bicentennial, Nebraskans commissioned eight modernistic sculptures for the rest areas along Interstate 80, transforming one of America's great transportation corridors into a statewide outdoor gallery. Today, seven of these sculptures remain standing, continuing to delight travelers and serving as lasting symbols of Nebraska's investment in public art and civic expression. As the nation

With support from the Nebraska Arts Council and Dietze Music, this piece intentionally recognizes and celebrates the unique intersection of community-based public art and community music in Nebraska. This interconnection is exemplified by Richard Field's sculpture *Memorial to the American Bandshell*, located at the Ashland, Nebraska rest area—a powerful symbol of how public art and band music have historically

commemorates the United States Semiquincentennial—**America 250—Nebraska’s rededication and celebration of the Interstate-80 Sculpture Garden**, sponsored by the Nebraska Arts Council and Nebraska Tourism, offers a meaningful way to honor 250 years of American creativity, innovation, and shared public space.

Community and town bands are among the oldest and most enduring musical traditions in American history, and Nebraska’s bands exemplify this legacy. Throughout the twentieth century, the growth of school bands and professional ensembles further strengthened this tradition. Beginning in the 1970s, the rise of community concert bands continued. Today, there are 15 active community bands across the state.

Nebraskans for the Arts commissioned a new concert band work from **Nebraska composer Nolan Schmit. *500 Mile Sculpture Garden: A Memorial to the American Bandshell*** will be performed by community bands throughout this spring, summer, and fall.

shared common civic spaces and purposes.

Please attend and support one of the community bands closest to you this year.

- Ashland Community Band
- Beatrice Community Band
- Bellevue Alumni Band
- Blair Community Band
- Civil War Brass Band
- Gering City Band
- Kearney Municipal Band
- Lincoln Community Concert Band
- Lincoln Municipal Band
- Nebraska Brass Band
- North Bend Area Community Band
- North Platte Municipal Band
- Northeast Community College Band
- Omaha Symphonic Winds
- Papillion Area Community Band
- Seward Municipal Band
- Southeast Nebraska Community Band in Auburn
- The Nebraska Wind Symphony
- Waverly Area Community Band
- WSC Symphonic & Community Band

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## Benefits of being a member of Nebraskans for the Arts

**THANK YOU** to all of our current members of Nebraskans for the Arts.

If you are not a member, we encourage you to become a part of a network of arts advocates. Your support is helping us expand our capacity to advocate for arts education, artists, arts organizations, and creative districts across the State of Nebraska. We are your VOICE in arts advocacy.

Individual memberships start at \$25/year.

BSG / ASE Grant Winners and Creative Districts are encouraged to join.

**Our work is more important now than ever. Be a part of our mission.**

**JOIN NFTA**

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**Thank You to Our Sponsors and Partners**



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