

Americans for the Arts Statement on Arts, Jobs, and the Economy

Jobs and job creation is a top policy issue for both the White House and Congress, and one that is underscored at every opportunity. On February 3, 2017 President Trump convened his Strategic & Policy Forum with over a dozen corporate leaders to discuss a national job creation agenda. This month, U.S. Senator Tom Udall (NM)—co-chair of the Senate Cultural Caucus and chief sponsor of the CREATE Act—was asked how best to advocate for the arts in the current environment: “Start by telling every one of your Senators about the economic benefits of the arts,” was his unequivocal response.

While America is in a time of deep political division, there is little disagreement about the importance of supporting jobs and strengthening the economy. Americans for the Arts has a clear and welcome message for the President and Congress: because you care about jobs and the economy, you can feel confident about investing in the arts.

Research by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) shows that the nonprofit and for-profit arts is a \$730 billion industry that directly employs 4.8 million arts workers. This represents 4.2 percent of the nation’s GDP—a larger share of the economy than transportation, tourism, and agriculture. Arts organizations are resilient and entrepreneurial businesses. They employ people locally, purchase goods and services from within their communities, and market and promote their regions. Arts businesses are rooted locally. These are jobs that cannot be shipped overseas.

Implications for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is the largest national funder of nonprofit arts organizations in America. Every \$1 of NEA funding leverages \$9 in private and public dollars and fuels a dynamic cultural economy and generates millions of American jobs. A pennies per capita annual investment has helped to leverage a nonprofit arts industry of almost 100,000 organizations strong serving millions of citizens in every part of America. Nonprofit arts organizations and their audiences today generate \$135 billion of economic activity that supports 4.1 million arts and non-arts jobs throughout their communities. This nonprofit sector has gone on to help incubate and provide the research and development for an even larger for-profit arts sector in our country. The value of the arts is of course the joy, beauty, and ideas of the work made accessible to all Americans. When opponents of government arts funding say our country can’t afford 45 cents per capita to support the NEA, we should all respond with economic facts as well—that an investment in the arts supports jobs, generates government revenue, and is a cornerstone of tourism.

Arts Strengthen the U.S. Economy

1. Arts strengthen the economy. The arts and culture sector is a \$730 billion industry, which represents 4.2 percent of the nation’s GDP—a larger share of the economy than transportation, tourism, and agriculture. The nonprofit arts industry alone generates \$135 billion in economic activity annually (spending by organizations and their audiences), which supports 4.1 million jobs and generates \$22.3 billion in government revenue.

2. Arts are good for local businesses. Attendees at nonprofit arts events spend \$24.60 per person, per event, beyond the cost of admission on items such as meals, parking, and babysitters—valuable revenue for local commerce and the community.
3. Arts are an export industry. The arts and culture industries posted a \$30 billion international trade surplus in 2014, according to the BEA. U.S. exports of arts goods (e.g., movies, paintings, jewelry) exceeded \$60 billion.
4. Arts drive tourism. Arts travelers are ideal tourists, staying longer and spending more to seek out authentic cultural experiences. Arts destinations grow the economy by attracting foreign visitor spending. The U.S. Department of Commerce reports that, between 2003-2015, the percentage of international travelers including “art gallery and museum visits” on their trip grew from 17 to 29 percent, and the share attending “concerts, plays, and musicals” increased from 13 to 16 percent.

You Can Make a Difference

- ***Be counted!*** Joins the thousands of people and organizations that have signed our national petition to President Donald Trump to continue funding the NEA. Our goal is 100,000 by March 21st. If you have not yet signed, please [add your name here](#) and encourage your friends and colleagues to sign as well
- ***Make your voice heard.*** We are staying in contact with Congress and the White House, delivering the economic impact message, and encouraging others to do as well. You should, too. Join the [Arts Action Fund](#) to take political action. It’s free. Encourage others to join. We will send you alerts so you can respond to decision-makers fast.
- ***Tell your story.*** When the City of Ft. Worth cut its arts budget for the 3rd consecutive year—millions of dollars for artists and arts organizations—arts leaders shared their new economic impact study showing how nonprofit arts organizations support jobs and generated local government revenue. It helped the City leaders understand that the arts are not just a feel-good investment, but also an industry. The result? The city not only stemmed the cuts but doubled its arts funding in its next budget. [Tell your local media your pro-arts story here.](#)