

# NEA budget poised to get a \$2 million boost, leaving arts organizations hopeful



Congressional leaders' plan for a stopgap funding bill calls for slightly increasing the NEA budget. (Saul Loeb / AFP/Getty Images)



By **Jessica Gelt**

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**A**fter a month worrying about the fate of funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and the hundreds of community organizations that the agency supports nationwide, the arts world found hope in congressional leaders' agreement Sunday that would not only maintain NEA funding for fiscal year 2017 but increase it by \$2 million.

In a statement Monday, the NEA struck an optimistic note, pointing out that the proposed appropriation of about \$150 million was the level of funding that it requested from Congress in February 2016.

“This morning Congress released the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, a bipartisan agreement that will fund the government for the remainder of FY 2017,” the NEA wrote in an email to the Los Angeles Times. “In this bill, the NEA is funded at its FY 2017 request level of \$149.849 million. ... The agency has been operating at

its FY 2016 appropriation of \$147.949 since October 1, 2016. Congress is expected to pass this bill later in the week, and the President is expected to sign it.”

The city of Los Angeles had joined civic and arts organizations across the country voicing support for the NEA. City leaders recently put forward a resolution to support funding for the organization as well as others threatened with budget cuts, including the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Corp. for Public Broadcasting, the National Institutes of Health and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, said Danielle Brazell, general manager of L.A.’s Department of Cultural Affairs. Mayor [Eric Garcetti](#) signed the document Saturday.

“I think any time the City Council puts forward a resolution at this level, it does fall onto the radar of our congressional members and on a priority list for action,” Brazell said.

Arts organizations had vowed to protest the elimination of the NEA and they urged supporters to write to Congress. “We have to make a stand,” Cornerstone Theater Company Managing Director Megan Wanlass told *The Times* in March, the day after President Trump’s budget blueprint was released.

John Echeveste, chief executive of the Mexican American museum and cultural center La Plaza de Cultura y Artes Foundation, said his group has an application pending with the NEA to support the creation of a historical walkway linking Union Station, Olvera Street, La Placita Church and La Plaza — a path telling the narrative of the city’s founding through murals, markers and other public artworks.

In early April, Echeveste received a letter from the NEA that read in part, “Like most federal agencies, the National Endowment for the Arts is operating under an FY17 Continuing Resolution, which ends on April 28, 2017.” The status of applicants’ grant applications would be delayed, the letter said, “pending the resolution of government funding for the remainder of FY17.”

On Monday, Echeveste had received no update but was optimistic.

“We’re essentially in a holding pattern and remain hopeful!” he said by email. “The project is moving forward without NEA support, but additional funding from NEA will enable us to expand the scope of the project.”

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