

August 4, 2009

The Honorable
House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

In response to the letter dated July 30, 2009, I want to clarify the misconceptions being circulated in regards to the grants the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) awarded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and provide the criteria for how the NEA selected its ARRA grant recipients.

FACT: The NEA did not use ARRA dollars to fund any of the projects cited in the letter. Consistent with the Act, ARRA grants from the NEA can only be used to provide salary support for staff positions or fees for previously-engaged artists and/or contractual personnel that are critical to an organization's artistic mission and in jeopardy of being eliminated as a result of the current economic climate.

FACT: All NEA ARRA direct grants required start dates of July 1, 2009 or later. All of the specific examples you cited occurred before this date. While the NEA did provide ARRA funding for the three organizations cited—Frameline, CounterPULSE, and Jess Curtis/Gravity, Inc.—due to the grant eligibility requirements and the award timeline, the NEA could not and did not provide ARRA funding for the examples cited.

FACT: The NEA supported these three San Francisco-based organizations in order to preserve five jobs that are critical to the function of each organization cited. Here is what the NEA ARRA grants are funding:

- **Frameline:** \$50,000 to support two positions
 - The Festival Director administers the Frameline Film and Video Completion Fund as well as oversees all aspects of the San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival.
 - The Distribution Director runs the Educational Film and Video Distribution Program.
- **Jess Curtis/Gravity:** \$25,000 to support two positions
 - The Artistic Director is responsible for artistic oversight and management.
 - The Program Manager is responsible for production and administration.
- **Counter Pulse:** \$25,000 to support one position
 - The Program Manager is the staff member who administers the Fiscal Sponsorship and Rental Exchange programs, while supervising the Theater Manager, Front of House Coordinator, and Program Intern.

NEA direct ARRA grants to organizations underwent a comprehensive and rigorous review process that involved Congressionally mandated panels of experts in the respective discipline fields. One hundred and nine panelists participated in the review of over 2,400 applications. The panelists assessed the ability of the organizations to preserve jobs in the arts with ARRA funds; decisions were not based on any specific programming of the applicant organizations. Under these guidelines, the panelists made their recommendations to the fourteen Presidentially-appointed and Senate-confirmed members of the National Council on the Arts who then made their recommendations to me, the Acting Chairman, for final approval.

The NEA is proud to have been included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and equally proud to have awarded ARRA grants in all fifty states that will help support and retain thousands of jobs for Americans across the country.

I hope this sufficiently answers the questions raised concerning NEA ARRA grants. Please do not hesitate to contact the NEA if there are any additional questions or concerns. Anita Decker, our Director of Government Affairs, can be reached at (202) 682-5434.

Sincerely,

Patrice Walker Powell
Acting Chairman
National Endowment for the Arts