

Eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

SAVINGS IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

| 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2016-2020 | 2016-2025 |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|-----------|
| \$296 | \$297 | \$298 | \$301 | \$309 | \$315 | \$322 | \$331 | \$337 | \$344 | \$1,501 | \$3,150 |

Heritage Recommendation:

Eliminate federal funding for both the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). This proposal saves \$296 million in 2016, and \$3.2 billion over 10 years.

Rationale:

Private contributions to the arts and humanities vastly exceed the amount provided by the NEA and NEH. According to the nonprofit Americans for the Arts, private giving to arts and humanities amounted to \$13.1 billion in 2011, which compared to \$292 million for the NEA and NEH combined. According to *The Washington Post*, Kickstarter alone provides more funding for the arts than the NEA does. *The Post* goes on to explain:

Individuals have always been the backbone of arts funding. The NEA has never tried to compete with individual donors, and that's the premise of Kickstarter—it's a platform that allows individual donors to fund projects. In 2011, individuals contributed \$13 billion to arts and cultural charities. According to the NEA, individuals make up 75 percent of all private giving, much more than corporations or foundations. Kickstarter, in essence, simplifies the long-held American tradition of individual private donors giving to the arts.

The exchange also highlights another misconception about the arts: that the U.S. government once funded the arts so heavily as to compete with private donors. In reality, the NEA has always made up a small part of overall arts funding when compared to private philanthropy.⁵⁹

Additional Reading:

- Katherine Boyle, “Yes, Kickstarter Raises More Money for Artists than the NEA. Here’s Why That’s Not Really Surprising,” *The Washington Post*, July 7, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/07/07/yes-kickstarter-raises-more-money-for-artists-than-the-nea-heres-why-that-s-not-really-surprising/>.
- Patrick Louis Knudsen, “Tight Budget? How Congress Can Save \$42 Billion by Eliminating Bad Government Programs,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2837, August 29, 2013, <http://www.Heritage.org/research/reports/2013/08/tight-budget-congress-can-save-42-billion-by-eliminating-bad-government-programs>.

Calculations:

Savings are expressed as budget authority and were calculated by using the FY 2014 enacted spending levels of the NEH as found on page 11 of NEH, “Appropriations Request for Fiscal Year 2015,” March 2014, http://www.neh.gov/files/neh_request_fy2015.pdf, and NEH, “National Endowment for the Arts Appropriations History,” 1966 to 2014, <http://arts.gov/open-government/national-endowment-arts-appropriations-history>. FY 2014 spending levels were increased at the same rate as discretionary spending for 2016–2025, according to the CBO’s most recent August 2014 baseline.