



Update

Greetings!

National Update

Federal Budget and the NEA

The process to construct and pass an FY2018 federal budget is underway, not without distraction, in Washington. The new fiscal year begins October 1, but there is question that Congress will pass a budget by then. Without an approved budget, the federal government is funded temporarily through continuing resolutions.

The process that results in a funding bill for the [National Endowment for the Arts](#) (NEA) began in a subcommittee of the House. (America's cultural institutions are funded through a variety of committees and bills, so we report here only on funding for the NEA.) Last month, we reported that the first draft called for an appropriation of \$145M, \$10M less than current funding levels. This draft passed out of subcommittee, went to the House Interior Committee, where it was also approved at \$145M.

Congress is on recess. There has been no action for funding the NEA on the Senate side. It is expected that the Senate will take up the budget immediately after Labor Day.

Tax Reform

Congress was unable to pass changes to the Affordable Care Act, and the likelihood of reforming the nation's tax code seems equally problematic. Though pro-reform language is poised to be tied to the budget resolution, it will go nowhere until a budget is proposed by Congress.

In whatever changes are proposed for the tax code, the arts will most likely benefit most if the charitable contribution option remains intact. Studies have shown that contributions to nonprofits are higher when taxpayers are given the option to itemize deductions rather than take a standard deduction. America's model for supporting nonprofits through contribution is the envy of many nations. To alter the way that that this system works stands to harm nonprofits across the country. Vermont's elected officials understand these issues but your communication with any or all of them will add strength to the ongoing conversation.

Senator Leahy's [Artist-Museum Partnership Act](#) of 2017 may well be added to the larger tax reform bill. Congratulations to Sen. Leahy; he has been advancing this bill for a number of years. It will possibly be under consideration when Congress addresses the federal budget.

State Update

The Arts Council recently announced Karen Mittelman will be the agency's next executive director. She will arrive in Vermont in mid-October, coming from the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) (NEH), where she is currently director of public programs. Prior to joining the NEH in 1998, Karen held a senior position at the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, and served as curator at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. She has more than 30 years of experience in the public sector and the federal cultural arena.



"I'm honored and excited to join the Vermont Arts Council in its vital mission," said Mittelman. "This is a challenging time for artists and cultural organizations, and it is also a time when the arts are essential to the life and strength of our communities. I look forward to working with my new colleagues and with our partners across the state to learn about, build on, and enhance Vermont's deep commitment to the arts."

Karen will become chief advocate for the state's arts and culture.

What You Can Do

Connect with your elected officials. The most effective advocacy efforts are face-to-face: stories supported by clear data. Build an open, direct relationship. Invite your elected officials to local/regional group meetings – forums, discussions, arts events, or even breakfast. Contact [Zon Eastes](#) for ideas and contacts in your area.

Be in touch. Every voice makes a difference!

All best--

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zon Eastes'.

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