

NOTE: The letter is now closed to new signatures. I am leaving this up for people's reference. Thanks to everyone who joined this effort!

Hello! We are a group of cultural workers who are concerned about the decision of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to fall in line with Trump's racist, sexist, ableist, and transphobic executive orders. As you may have read, last week the NEA revised the compliance requirements for organizations applying for Grants for Arts Projects.

Specifically, the NEA has added these two paragraphs:

- The applicant's compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the U.S. Government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of title 31, United States Code, pursuant to Executive Order No. 14173, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity, dated January 21, 2025.
- The applicant understands that federal funds shall not be used to promote gender ideology, pursuant to Executive Order No. 14168, Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government.

(The full text of the requirements can be found [here](#).)

We are responding with a letter to the NEA, asking them to reverse this decision and to resist further efforts by this administration to undermine the NEA's mission. This letter will be sent to leadership at the NEA on Tuesday, Feb. 18.

We hope you will sign it and share it widely with your arts communities. This is a time for us to stand up for and with artists of color, women artists, artists with disabilities, trans artists, and everyone who cares about free expression.

NOTE: We ask for your email address so we can keep in touch about the progress of the letter and any responses we receive. Your email address will not be included when we send it out, nor will we share it with anyone else. We are remaining anonymous ONLY because this call will be posted on social media, and because we feel the letter is stronger without specific authors attached.

NOTE: The signature form includes a space for comments. Feel free to ask any questions, and we will do our best to get back to you with answers.

In solidarity,

Your fellow artists

To the National Endowment for the Arts:

We are artists, playwrights, choreographers, performers, musicians, and workers from many parts of the arts and culture sector. All of us have benefited from the NEA's grant making activities, either directly from the Endowment's support for the institutions that have developed and presented our work, or indirectly but no less importantly from the role that the Endowment has played in creating the vibrant and diverse arts ecosystem of which we are grateful to be a part.

We are writing to express our tremendous disappointment that the NEA has made the short-sighted decision to change its compliance requirements for the Grants for Arts Projects, conforming to Trump's reactionary and discriminatory executive orders. The orders in question, Executive Order nos. 14173 and 14168, are being challenged in the courts, and will likely be invalidated on statutory and Constitutional grounds. In fact, parts of EO no. 14168 have already been enjoined.

While the arts community stands in solidarity with the NEA, we oppose this betrayal of the Endowment's mission to "foster and sustain an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States." We ask that the NEA reverse those changes to the compliance requirements.

We recognize that our colleagues at the NEA are in a difficult position. Perhaps the hope is that by making these compromises, the Endowment will be able to continue its important work. But abandoning our values is wrong, and it won't protect us. Obedience in advance only feeds authoritarianism.

Trump and his enablers may use doublespeak to claim that support for artists of color amounts to "discrimination" and that funding the work of trans and women artists promotes "gender ideology" (whatever that is). But we know better: the arts are for and represent everybody. We can't give that up. The

NEA must not abandon these principles—or these artists. Artists are not in the business of promoting ideology (whatever that means). We are compelled to tell our truths, to create community around the stories that give life to those truths, and to make common cause with others while we share this time on earth.

The arts have a particularly important role to play in times of political crisis. When national identities fracture and the public sphere shrinks or becomes increasingly contentious, the arts serve as an indispensable source of memory, imagination, and envisioning. The arts community, which the NEA both supports and is a part of, must stand together in the face of those who would erase our memories, cramp our imaginations, and blinker our vision.

In this spirit, we ask the NEA to reverse these prejudicial changes to its compliance requirements, and refuse to implement any further such restrictions going forward.