

Remarks for the Honorable Doris O. Matsui
Floor Consideration of FY11 C.R. – NEA General
Thursday, February 17, 2011

Mr. Speaker, I move to strike the last word.

I rise today in opposition to the C.R put forward by my Republican colleagues -- and specifically to the amendment offered by Mr. Garrett of New Jersey and Mr. Mack of Florida, and a separate amendment by Mr. Walberg of Michigan -- which would either eliminate or drastically reduce funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

In tough economic times, funding for the arts may appear to be an easy area to cut. But we cannot forget that the arts industry is an active and crucial part of the American economy.

The non-profit arts industry generates \$166.2 billion annually and supports 5.7 million full time jobs across the United States.

Spending in the arts stimulates local economies, creates attractive communities, and supports tourism.

Cultural tourism alone contributes \$192 billion annually to our country's economy.

And the federal government is not the lone supporter of these projects, but the federal funding is critical to leveraging local, state, and private dollars.

The direct grants from the National Endowment for the Arts that reach each and every congressional district around the country are often matched by other resources.

In my hometown of Sacramento, California, NEA funding is helping to support a thriving arts scene that is helping to put our city on the map.

In addition to bringing intellectual diversity to the region, it is helping to support young artists, smaller museums, and cultural programs.

NEA funding supports galleries and exhibits that are part of an extended classroom for our students.

As a former docent of the Crocker Art Museum, I can tell you firsthand the effect that an individual piece of art or a trip to a museum can have on a child.

Many children would never have the opportunity otherwise to participate in these inspiring experiences.

And the commitment of federal funding for our local artists and art venues sends a strong signal that we are a nation that thinks art is important, and that symbol's influence cannot be overstated.

We must make tough choices. But the question is where. I do not believe gutting our nation's cultural institutions is the place to do so.

We cannot afford to stifle the creativity of our students and our citizens.

I urge my colleagues to vote against these harmful amendments and against this C.R.