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## Funding increase approved for NEA

By Dana Stewart / Special to the Fairfax County Times  
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**NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
for the ARTS**  
**arts.gov**

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In the background of impeachment and a year-end legislative frenzy, the House of Representatives passed a \$1.4 trillion national budget on December 17 that included an approved budget of \$162 million for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the largest awarded in six years.

The Democratic majority House sent a domestic funding package to the Republican majority Senate who approved the FY20 funding bill on December 19 before it landed on the president's desk, avoiding a government shutdown over the holiday break.

The president signed the bill on Friday, Dec. 20, despite his repeated calls to the zero out funding for the NEA. The \$162 million NEA budget is an increase of \$7.25 million over last year's funding and moves the agency closer to achieving its goal of returning to the 1992 funding level of \$175 million.

The passage of the FY20 domestic appropriations legislation ends Congressional bickering and continuing funding resolutions to keep the government operating through the fiscal year.

"I am pleased that the U.S. House of Representatives and leaders of the House and Senate Appropriations committees have avoided a government shutdown and reached an agreement on all 12 fiscal year (FY) 2020 spending bills, particularly the ones that are important for cultural support in our country and of significance to Americans for the Arts—funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and federal cultural agencies, juvenile justice, arts education and ground-breaking support for creative arts therapies in funding through the Defense Department and Veterans Affairs Department," said Robert L. Lynch, Americans for the Arts President and CEO.

The NEA has not yet responded to the funding increase, but the potential for additional grant opportunities in Virginia is likely.

The NEA is the only funder, private or public, that supports the arts in all 50 states. In the last five years, more than \$7 million grants were distributed to Virginia arts organizations, including local groups: ARTSFAIRFAX, The Hub Theatre, Reston Chorale, Amadeus Concerts and the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia.

Virginia's arts and culture industries play a significant role in the economy. The NEA reports that in one year, arts and culture production in Virginia added \$17 billion to the state's economy.

In addition to funding the NEA, the domestic package funds the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Energy, Interior, Legislative, Veterans Affairs, Transportation, State and other related agencies.