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February 3, 2003

Senate Finance Committee

I am speaking today in support of the Governor's budget for the Nevada Arts Council.

The Governor's budget for the NAC is fair during these difficult economic times. However, the programs and services of the NAC generate significant private investment in the arts that far outdistance the small state investment. For instance, the NAC last year granted my organization \$21,000 for general operating support, less than 1% of my annual budget. Yet these funds are critical. NAC Operating Support grants go toward institutional stability. These funds help all of our arts organizations by providing critical dollars that enable us to keep our doors open and our educational programs operating.

Arts organizations in our state fill the void in arts education for our children. In Northern Nevada, The Nevada Museum of Art has arts programs that involve almost every school in Washoe, Douglas, and Storey counties, the Philharmonic, Ballet, and Opera also maintain active programs through the schools, supporting existing instruction and, in many instances, providing arts instruction where none exists. These organizations provide educational and entertaining programs unavailable through any other outlet in our community.

And we also know that a strong arts and cultural environment creates an attractive environment for new businesses and their employees; and helps to stimulate economic growth within our communities and tourist traffic from without. For instance, over the past three years cultural organizations have invested over \$50 million in capital construction in downtown Reno. My institution, with its new facility set to open in May of this year, had a total capital investment of \$16 million and raised over \$22 million in private funds from within our state.

As the nature of philanthropy changes, NAC funding is crucial in supporting core expenses of our organizations. Nevada is rich in important philanthropic organizations like the Donald W. Reynolds, E.L. Wiegand, and E.L. Cord foundations, and also in community-minded corporations like IGT and Sierra Pacific. Yet their support is often tied directly to specific programs and projects. State and federal support for the arts provides the foundation, the critical operational funds, from which our public exhibitions and educational programs can be built. Though state funds are less than 1% of my operating budget, these dollars are a crucial component of our funding structure, a component not easily replaced.

I encourage you to vote for the arts in Nevada by supporting the Governor's budget for the Nevada Arts Council.

Steven High
Executive Director
Nevada Museum of Art

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