

ADVOCACY GUIDE

CULTURE CUTS DEEP

ARTS AND HUMANITIES

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ARTS & HUMANITIES ADVOCACY

HOW TO ADVOCATE ON A LOCAL, STATE, AND
FEDERAL LEVEL

Our Collective Purpose

PROTECT OUR ARTS. ACT NOW.

Recent federal funding cuts have placed Mississippi's creative economy in jeopardy. Artists, organizations, educators, and community programs across our state are at risk of losing vital support.

This toolkit was created to help you take action. While year-round advocacy is always important, this moment is different. We are facing an immediate threat to the infrastructure that supports Mississippi's vibrant arts and cultural identity.

The consequences of inaction are real and urgent. Without swift and vocal support, Mississippi stands to lose the very programs that enrich our communities, provide educational opportunities for our children, and create economic opportunities in towns and cities across the state. This is a pivotal moment — we must mobilize to protect what makes Mississippi creative, connected, and culturally rich.

You can make a difference. Whether you're an artist, educator, student, parent, business owner, or supporter of the arts, your voice is needed right now. This guide will walk you through the steps to advocate effectively and ensure our lawmakers understand that the arts are essential. By raising your voice and sharing your story, you help show our leaders that these programs are not expendable — they are part of what makes Mississippi thrive. The time to act is not later, but now.

**ARTS SUPPORTERS,
CONTACT YOUR STATE
LEGISLATORS AND ASK
THEM TO SUPPORT FUNDING
FOR THE ARTS AND
HUMANITIES IN MISSISSIPPI**



WHAT'S AT STAKE

MISSISSIPPI HAS A LOT TO LOSE. LETS FIGHT TO KEEP IT

Federal cuts to arts funding will have **real, immediate consequences** in Mississippi:

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Mississippi's arts and cultural sector contributes more than \$1.1 billion to the state's economy annually and supports over 9,000 jobs. In recent years, arts education and nonprofit arts programming have reached hundreds of thousands of residents across both urban and rural communities. These programs also attract tourism dollars and stimulate local economies, particularly in small towns and historic districts.

Losing federal support means losing not only direct funding for these efforts but also the public-private partnerships and local investment that federal dollars help leverage.

- Community arts programs will be reduced or eliminated
- Public schools may lose access to arts education
- Local festivals and cultural events could disappear
- Arts jobs and creative businesses will suffer
- Rural and underserved communities will lose vital connections

This is not just about art. It's about livelihoods, learning, and local identity.

The arts bring in revenue, attract tourism, improve education, support mental health, and foster civic pride. When the arts are defunded, we all lose.

HOW TO ADVOCATE

LOCALLY, STATEWIDE, AND NATIONALLY

1 Tell Your Story

Speak from your experience. How have the arts impacted you, your students, your community? Authentic stories are powerful.

2. Use Urgent Messaging

Use talking points that focus on what's at risk:

"Every dollar cut from the arts is a lost investment in Mississippi's future."

"When we lose arts programs, we lose jobs, student success, and cultural heritage."

3. Contact Lawmakers

Visit ls.state.ms.us to find your representatives. Send an email, make a phone call, or schedule a meeting.

4. Attend Public Meetings

School board, city council, and legislative meetings are opportunities to speak up. Prepare a 1–2 minute statement about why the arts matter.

5. Go Digital

Post on social media using: #MSArtsMatter | #ProtectMSArts | #SupportMSHumanities Tag local leaders and share how arts cuts affect your community.

6. Be Consistent

Follow our Advocacy Calendar to make sure you are a consistent presence at a local, state, and federal level. Advocate loud and advocate often!

TELL YOUR STORY

CULTURE CUTS DEEP: A CAMPAIGN BY MISSISSIPPI CULTURAL LEADERS TO SHARE THE IMPACT OF GRANT CUTS



The arts and humanities are a vital part of life in Mississippi—they live in our schools, on our stages, at our festivals, and in the communities we love. But many of these programs are at risk as key grants and funding sources are being cut.

The Mississippi Presenters Network, in partnership with the Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education, is launching the Culture Cuts Deep campaign—a statewide video project to show what’s really at stake. We’re inviting artists, arts organizations, cultural groups, and community partners to share short videos about why the arts and humanities matter and how they’ve impacted towns and people across Mississippi.

These videos will be edited into a collaborative public message and shared across the state as a rallying cry for support.

Want to be involved?

Step 1: Fill out this short form so we know who you are and how to credit your work:

➡ [Tell us about you](#)

Step 2: Upload your video and any visuals (logos, posters, photos) here:

➡ [Upload to Dropbox](#)

CULTURE RUNS DEEP

GUIDELINES FOR STORYTELLING VIDEO

Guidelines:

Keep it under 90 seconds — we've found this hits hardest with viewers

No background movement — please don't film while walking or driving

Any camera is fine — phone, laptop, whatever you've got

We want to see you — feel free to display your artwork, facility or logo in the setting behind you

Don't worry about editing — just upload what you have and we'll handle it

Include any visuals (logos, photos, posters) you want to be featured

Questions to Answer in Your Video:

Name, organization, and title

→ "I'm Bob Barker, a photographer based in [town]."

→ "I'm Sally Jones, director of XYZ Cultural Center in [town]."

How do you engage Mississippi communities through your work?

→ "Our stage hosts community theater, and we offer year-round arts education..."

→ "I teach, exhibit work statewide, and organize an annual arts event..."

→ "We host a weekly authors talk at our local library."

What grant support have you received that is now at risk?

→ Think: NEA, MAC, NEH, MHC

→ "MAC's operating grant helps us plan two years of programming in advance..."

→ "Mississippi Humanities Council grants allow us to engage experts in our programs,

→ "I've received fellowships to collaborate and show work throughout the state..."

What happens if this support goes away?

→ "Without this funding, our ability to plan, expand, and innovate is severely limited."

→ "Grants allow me to focus on creating meaningful work that feeds back into the community."

FIND YOUR LEGISLATORS

STEP
1

FIND YOUR LEGISLATOR



[SEARCH BY ADDRESS](#)

STEP
2

GATHER CONTACT INFO

[MS HOUSE ROSTER](#)

[MS SENATE ROSTER](#)

STEP
3

SEND A PERSONAL
MESSAGE

LET THEM KNOW...

WHY YOU ARE CALLING

WHERE YOU RESIDE

HOW THEY CAN HELP

ASK YOUR LEGISLATOR TO:

- PROTECT AND RESTORE STATE-LEVEL ARTS FUNDING TO OFFSET FEDERAL CUTS.
- ALLOCATE EMERGENCY FUNDS OR SUPPLEMENTAL GRANTS TO STABILIZE ARTS AND HUMANITIES ORGANIZATIONS IMPACTED BY LOST FEDERAL DOLLARS.
- INCLUDE ARTS AND CULTURE IN ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES.
- SUPPORT DEDICATED FUNDING FOR ARTS EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.
- PRESERVE MISSISSIPPI ARTS COMMISSION AND MISSISSIPPI HUMANITIES COUNCIL FUNDING AT OR ABOVE PREVIOUS LEVELS.
- SPONSOR OR SUPPORT LEGISLATION THAT SECURES LONG-TERM INVESTMENT IN THE STATE'S CREATIVE ECONOMY.
- ATTEND AND PUBLICLY SUPPORT LOCAL ARTS EVENTS TO DEMONSTRATE LEADERSHIP AND COMMITMENT

CONTACT LAWMAKERS

ACTION STEPS

1. Find out who represents you! [Legislator Look Up Tool](#)

NOTHING
BEATS BEING
THERE:
STAND UP
FOR THE
ARTS IN
PERSON!

2. Make an appointment, send an email, make a phone call...focus on the urgency of this situation

Join the fight by contacting your state & local representatives & elected officials to show the effect the arts have on your community.

3. Share personal stories with your elected officials about WHY their support of and increased funding for the arts matters to YOU & YOUR community!

4. Talking Points

- Mississippi's creative economy supports over 9,000 jobs statewide
- For every \$1 invested in the arts, Mississippi receives \$5 in economic return
- Students with access to arts education have higher test scores and graduation rates
- Arts programs improve mental health and reduce isolation, especially in rural areas
- Cuts to the arts disproportionately affect low-income and underserved communities
- In 2024, with just \$1 million in federal funding, the Mississippi Humanities Council presented 750 programs across 90 communities and supported 65 grants to various institutions, including colleges, historical societies, museums, and community organizations.



MISSISSIPPI ADVOCACY FOR ARTS AND HUMANITIES

ELECTED OFFICIAL GUIDE

Each person in Mississippi has two State Legislators who represent your district which is determined by your street address.

To find your Mississippi State Legislators, you can enter your street address here: <https://pluralpolicy.com/find-your-legislator/>

- House District numbers are 1-122. (Lower Chamber)
- Senate District numbers are 1-52. (Upper Chamber)

We encourage you to learn more about your legislators, including the committees they serve on, room numbers at the Mississippi State House (Capitol building in Jackson) and their contact information.

- MS House of Representatives: www.legislature.ms.gov/legislators/representatives/
- MS Senators: www.legislature.ms.gov/legislators/senators/

If you are asking for support of state funding for the Arts Commission and Humanities Council, one of the most effective information to arm yourself with is to know where MAC and MHC have given grants in your/their district. You can visit MAC's website at <https://arts.ms.gov/grant-recipients/> to find a list of grantees by grant type.

If you would like to know what MAC grants have been distributed in your district, visit supporttheartsms.com/advocacy where you can look up grants received by legislative district.

Sample email or letter to set up a meeting:

Dear Senator (or Representative),

I hope this message finds you well. I'm reaching out to request a brief meeting at your convenience to discuss the urgent impact of recent federal arts funding cuts on Mississippi's communities, schools, and creative economy.

As someone who works closely with [arts organizations/artists/educators] in our district, I'd like to share how these changes are affecting us locally and offer ideas on how we can work together to protect and strengthen the arts in our state. Thank you for your time and service. I look forward to the opportunity to speak with you.

(Your Name)

(Your Title, Your Organization)

CONTACT LAWMAKERS: SAMPLE EMAIL

Subject: Please Support the Arts in Mississippi

Dear [Representative/Senator Name],

I am writing to urge you to take action to protect arts funding in Mississippi. Recent federal cuts threaten the programs, jobs, and educational opportunities that make our communities strong and vibrant.

I respectfully ask that you support restoring state-level arts funding to offset federal losses, protect Mississippi Arts Commission and Mississippi Humanities Council funding, and explore emergency or supplemental funding for local arts and humanities organizations. Additionally, please advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in statewide economic development and educational initiatives. The arts contribute over \$1.1 billion to Mississippi's economy and support more than 9,000 jobs. They are not only an economic engine but also a critical part of our educational and community infrastructure — especially in rural and underserved areas. Without sufficient funding, we risk losing vital programs that help our students thrive, provide outlets for youth and families, and preserve the cultural fabric of our state.

As your constituent, I believe the arts are essential to our state's future. Please do everything in your power to defend and sustain Mississippi's creative sector. Thank you for your time and consideration.

-YOUR ORGANIZATION

It takes just 10 individuals to contact a legislator to make a difference. We know your love of the arts will make you one of the ten we can count on!

Please contact your local state legislator: [Legislator Look Up Tool](#)



**ACTION STEP:
FIND YOUR
LOCAL
LEGESLATOR**

EXAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Federal Cuts Threaten Mississippi Arts: Advocates Call on Lawmakers to Act Now

(your community), MS (May 14, 2025) – Mississippi’s arts and cultural sector is facing a critical turning point. Recent federal funding cuts to the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and related programs have put the state’s creative economy at risk, threatening everything from arts education and community programming to local jobs and tourism revenue. The Mississippi Presenters Network (MSPN) is calling on residents and legislators alike to respond — urgently and decisively.

Mississippi’s creative sector contributes more than \$1.1 billion annually to the state’s economy and supports over 9,000 jobs, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. These aren’t just numbers — they represent working artists, educators, cultural workers, and small business owners across urban and rural Mississippi.

“We are at a pivotal moment,” said Carrie White, Program Director at MSPN. “Without swift action, the programs that connect our communities, inspire our children, and fuel our local economies may disappear.”

To combat these losses, MSPN has released the Mississippi Arts and Humanities Advocacy Toolkit, a step-by-step guide for citizens to contact legislators, speak at public meetings, and mobilize community support. The toolkit provides templates, talking points, and critical background on what’s at stake if arts funding continues to erode.

The organization is urging Mississippians to ask lawmakers to:

- Restore state-level arts funding to offset federal losses
- Protect funding for the Mississippi Arts Commission and Mississippi Humanities Council
- Include arts and culture in economic recovery and rural development plans
- Support emergency relief or stabilization grants for local arts organizations

“The arts are not optional — they are essential,” said [Quote from local artist/educator]. “They strengthen our economy, improve education outcomes, and bring us together as a community.”

The Mississippi Arts Advocacy Toolkit is available now through MSPN and can be accessed at www.presentmississippi.org

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT TO HELP SUPPORT THE NEA

PARTNER TOOLKIT: SOCIAL MEDIA

Within this toolkit is a collection of sample copy and graphics designed for Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn to help your organization amplify the call to protect the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

We encourage you to share these assets across your own social media channels to show support, raise awareness in your community, and help drive urgent action in response to the recent cancellation of NEA grants, staff reductions, and budget elimination.

- Use the sample copy provided or personalize it with your local stories.
- Pair your post with the graphics included in this toolkit.
- Tag your elected officials and use the hashtag #ProtectTheNEA to join the national conversation.

AFTA SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT

Your voice—and your community's stories—are essential to making an impact. Let's mobilize together to ensure the arts remain a national priority.



FACEBOOK HEADERS



FACEBOOK POSTS



INSTAGRAM POSTS



RESPONSE TO NEA AND NEH CUTS

ADDITIONAL ACTION STEPS

Appeal NEA Grant Cancellations

If your organization has been affected by the NEA grant cancellations, it's critical to submit your appeal by the deadline provided in your grant communication. This preserves your eligibility, ensures your voice is counted in broader advocacy, and helps document the widespread impact of these cuts. Even if you're unsure of the outcome, submitting an appeal strengthens the collective case for restoring funding.

Complete the National Pulse Survey

Help us quantify the harm and amplify your voice with lawmakers:

- If you are an arts and culture organization, please [complete the survey](#) by EOD Friday, May 16. The survey will only take six minutes to complete.
- If you are able to share this survey with your local network of arts and culture organizations, please forward the survey using [our email template](#) for distribution.

Share Your Story with AFTA!

Americans for the Arts is collecting powerful, personal stories from across the country to show how the arts transform lives and communities.

Across every state, in every community, the story of America's creativity is unfolding. But now, that story is at risk. Americans for the Arts is collecting real stories that show how the arts transform lives—paired with powerful local data to advocate for continued public investment in the arts

[Share Your Story Today](#)

RESOURCES

[IF YOUR FEDERAL GRANT IS TERMINATED - HOLLAND AND KNIGHT](#)

[GRANT TERMINATION RESOURCE - NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NONPROFITS](#)

[EXECUTIVE ORDERS IMPACTING THE ARTS - FAQ](#)

[2025 BREAKING NEWS TIMELINE](#)

[OFFICE HOURS WITH AFTA ARTS ADVOCACY TEAM](#)

[JOIN THE ARTS EDUCATION FUND FOR BREAKING NEWS UPDATES](#)

NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT for the **ARTS**


**Americans
for the Arts**



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT
FOR THE HUMANITIES

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10 DAYS OF CONSISTENT ADVOCACY

Advocacy Calendar

Day 1 – Read & Reflect

- Read through the Mississippi Arts & Humanities Advocacy Guidebook. (This Guidebook!)
- Write down your personal story: How have the arts or humanities impacted your life or community?

Day 2 – Email Your Legislators

- Use the email template on Page 12 to contact your state and federal lawmakers.
- Personalize your message with your story and local examples.

Day 3 – Social Media Post #1

- Share your story on social media (page 14) using hashtags:
- #MSArtsMatter | #ProtectMSArts | #SupportMSHumanities
- Tag your lawmakers and local leaders.

Day 4 – Invite Others

- Organize or promote a letter-writing effort at your school, arts center, or with colleagues.
- Send out the Press Release on page 13

Day 5 – Video Submission (Culture Cuts Deep)

- Record your 60–90 second video.
- Submit it using the campaign instructions on Pages 7 & 8:
- Upload Your Video | Fill Out the Form

Day 6 – Contact Local Officials

- Reach out to a school board member, city council member, or mayor.
- Use the talking points on pages 5, 9, and 10 to explain what's at stake locally.

Day 7 – Social Media Post #2

- Share a photo or flyer from your organization or community arts event.
- Use a quote or data point from Page 2. Templates on page 14.
- Repost others using the same hashtags.

Day 8 – Attend or Watch a Public Meeting

- Speak during public comment or submit a statement in writing.
- Refer to sample email on page 11 to schedule a meeting.

Day 9 – Survey & Stories

- Complete the National Pulse Survey by May 16 (Page 15).
- Share your story with Americans for the Arts: [Submit Your Story](#)

Day 10 – Celebrate & Share

- Post a thank-you or encouragement to other advocates.
- Highlight someone else's advocacy effort, video, or story.
- Revisit your legislators' pages and comment or message to follow up.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE ARTS



Mississippi Alliance
for **arts** Education



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MISSISSIPPI
by Mississippi Presenters Network

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