
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On “*The Economic and Employment Impact of the Arts and Music Industry*”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on “The Economic and Employment Impact of the Arts and Music Industry.”*

Today we’ll take a look at the impact of two important sectors of our economy – the arts and music – and how losses in these fields are impacting workers, families and communities across the country. Their contributions to our economy are frequently – and unfairly – overlooked.

Our economy is in the worst crisis this nation has seen since the Great Depression. Workers are losing jobs at a rate of over 600,000 a month, families are losing income and benefits, and communities are suffering. The unemployment rate has hit a 25 year high.

The non-profit arts and culture industries inject over \$166 billion into our economy each year, according to a recent study by the Americans for the Arts. These sectors support 5.7 million jobs and over \$104 billion in household income.

In many places, like my home state of California, for example, the arts and music industries are vital engines for local economies – making up a large share of revenue and providing many employment opportunities.

Spending by nonprofit arts and culture organizations provide work for more than just artists, curators, and musicians - they also directly support builders, plumbers, accountants, printers, and an array of other occupations.

Workers in these fields are bearing a disproportionate brunt of this economic tsunami. According to research conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts, unemployment in the arts rose at a higher rate than the overall workforce in 2008.

In fact, the unemployment rate for artists is double that of other professional workers. In the last quarter of 2008, the unemployment rate for artists grew by 64 percent – for a total of 129,000 displaced workers.

This is playing out even in the most iconic art venues. In January, more than a dozen Broadway shows in New York closed and Carnegie Hall has cut its schedule down by 10 percent.

The Philadelphia Art Museum announced it would have to eliminate 30 positions. The Miami City Ballet has cut eight of its 53 dancers.

Right here in DC, the Smithsonian has instilled a hiring freeze.

And community theatres across the country, from Massachusetts to South Carolina to Baltimore to San Francisco, are closing their doors.

Without the contributions and influence of the arts, our economy suffers greatly. Families suffer from layoffs, lost income and purchasing power.

When we talk about arts and music, we're not just talking about artists and musicians. We're also talking about museums and galleries, symphonies and orchestras, community theatres and other non profits that shape our neighborhoods, towns and cities.

This industry helps attract audiences, spurs local business development and stimulates learning in classrooms. Research shows that when students are exposed to arts and music, they perform better in other subjects.

President Obama has made it clear that arts and music have a critical role to play in improving our workforce, our schools, and our quality of life.

Arts, music and other cultural activities bring out our creativity and make us richer as individuals and communities.

For these very reasons, President Obama's economic recovery plan included a \$50 million investment to save jobs in the arts, supplement declines in charitable giving, and keep cultural activities thriving in communities.

He isn't the first President to recognize the importance of promoting the arts economy in times of recession.

President Roosevelt made art a focal point of his New Deal to lift this nation out of the Great Depression. His goal was to create programs that would help every American, no matter how poor, how hungry, how desperate.

He created the Works Progress Administration. This included creating a government relief program for 10,000 unemployed artists, who helped create 100,000 easel paintings, 18,000 sculptures, 13,000 prints, 4,000 murals and other works of art that have helped enrich our nation.

When Harry Hopkins, who President Roosevelt tasked to run the program, was questioned about it, he responded “*Hell, they’ve got to eat just like other people.*”

Many of these murals can still be seen in schools, post offices and other government buildings. In my district, the Vacaville Post Office proudly displays “Fruit Season,” an oil painting by Emrich Nicholson.

Today’s hearing kicks off a series our committee will hold this Spring to examine how the arts and music can help us rebuild towns and cities and spur economic growth and also how they can help improve student learning.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how supporting the arts and music can help us build a stronger America. Thank you for being here.

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