

*"Learning through the arts reinforces critical academic skills in reading language arts and math and provides students with the skills to creatively solve problems.*

~First Lady Michelle Obama

The Arts in the United States are losing financial support and closing programs. The economy, decrease in private endowments, and lack of government support are some of the causes.

Advocacy organizations have been working during the current Florida Legislative Session to make adverse bills known to the public. Websites offered ways for citizens to contact their representatives to encourage voting for or against the bills. While Congress is in Session, many of the same advocacy groups are contacting private citizens to give the information on bills that will affect the arts through our country.

Concern: HR 1891 – This Bill seeks the termination of 43 federal education programs, including the entire Arts in Education program at the United State Department of Education. The bill threatens to de-fund arts education and would permanently strip language out of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that allows funding for Arts in Education. Arts in Education has been able to offer grants and other initiatives to provide for arts education to all students. Funding would be lost to VSA (formerly Very Special Arts), which supports and educates students with disabilities and The John F. Kennedy Center which supports a network of national model programs involving more than 16 million students.

Concern: Florida State Legislature funding cuts have been drastic for non-profit, school and cultural arts.

Concern: funding to counties for 2011-12 has caused local School Boards to cut programs and teaching positions. Nearly 4, 500 educators have lost their jobs many because their programs were closed. This has greatly affected art and music, especially in the elementary schools.

Concern: another round of education cuts for 2012-13 is expected and will cause the continuation of cancelled programs.

FSMTA members please:

- Register to vote
- Vote! Know your local candidates and how they will vote on issues that affect Florida
- E-mail or call your local representative to express your opinion
- Attend a School Board meeting to support the continuation of arts programs in your county or express displeasure, if programs are being cut.
- Volunteer to join your local ACE Coalition (Arts of a Complete Education - FAAE) in their efforts to save arts programs in your community,
- Help make everyone see that children are our future and the arts are vital to their education
- Don't wait for others to speak on these issues. Your voice is important now. Please help!

Respectfully submitted  
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