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NEA to get \$50 million for arts jobs under stimulus bill

The National Endowment for the Arts will receive a \$50 million increase to its yearly budget as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, whose final version was signed by President Obama today.

The funding increase for the NEA is expected to create jobs in the arts. Much of that funding is expected to be funneled through arts agencies in all 50 states, said Lisa Caretto, board member of California Arts Advocates, a statewide arts advocacy organization.

"As I understand it, the NEA intends to make the new grants consistent with the goals of economic stimulus and job creation," said Caretto. "The increase of funds will be for used the arts workforce-for jobs."

Although it is still unclear how the funds will be handed out by arts agencies, Caretto said local arts organizations might be able to use the funds to help with payroll issues. Some of those funds are to be given first to the state's arts agency-the California Arts Council, she said.

The funds, which are part of the \$787 billion stimulus package, may also be used for maintaining jobs, said Caretto.

"So the funds may go to a local organization, like the Sacramento Ballet, that has been assuring its dancers that they still have jobs," she said.

The Sacramento Ballet notified its subscribers Jan. 21 and the public at large Jan. 22 that it was canceling the remaining programs in its 2008-09 season because of financial reasons.

"But it's up to the arts organizations to apply for this money when they come out with the grant guidelines and requirements for proposals," she said.

It remains to be seen how the extra funds, once allocated, will affect local arts organizations.

But one thing is clear, the arts have a large economic impact on the region.

The estimated economic impact of arts and cultural activities in the Sacramento region totals approximately \$350 million annually, according to the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission.

Categories: Edward Ortiz

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