



Nevada arts leaders fighting for funding

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WASHINGTON (Gray DC) -- Funding for the Reno Philharmonic Orchestra could be in jeopardy. President Trump is proposing eliminating the National Endowment for the Arts. A Nevada Arts Council leader traveled to Washington to urge lawmakers to reject the president's request. He says that it could ruin the positive impact the arts have had on Nevadans.

"It is revitalizing a lot of our communities," says Tony Manfredi, executive director of the Nevada Arts Council. He is in Washington with a message for his lawmakers: reject President Trump's 2019 budget proposal calling for elimination of the National Endowment for the Arts. The NEA provides roughly 150 million federal dollars to arts programs nationwide.

"It's not funding everything but it's really helping to seed all of the great work that we're able to do," Manfredi says. He says for every dollar invested in Nevada arts, there is a nine dollar return. He says his lawmakers, like Senator Catherine Cortez Masto understand the cultural and economic importance of the NEA. Last year, the president also proposed eliminating the NEA. But Congress ultimately increased funding. Senator Cortez Masto says, "we turn around and put the money in because we know in Congress how important that money is to our communities."

Final budget decisions are in the hands of Congress, but Ryan Bourne from the Libertarian Cato Institute says spending is out of control, and cuts are necessary: "there's no real requirement or duty imposed on the government to engage in arts funding." Bourne wants to know why low-earning taxpayers have to fund arts programs that don't matter to them. He says if art is important to a community, they should find the money to fund it. "If these activities are worthwhile," says Bourne, "and there's a demand for them out there, then actually people should be able to find funding either in the private marketplace or in the charitable sector.

Congress has an upcoming two week recess before they can address arts funding for 2019.