

## Comments presented to the Joint Finance Committee — February 25, 2009

**Governor**  
Jack A. Markell

On behalf of the Delaware State Arts Council and Delaware's arts industry, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about the great work ahead of us, well aware of the economic challenges facing our state and the most difficult decisions you will be asked to make over the next several months.

**Director**  
Paul Weagraff

**DE State Arts Council**  
Lise Monty, Chair  
Wilmington

I come with only one request: to carefully consider the work of the Delaware Division of the Arts and its service to the arts sector of our economy as you move forward in your budgetary considerations. More than 150 arts providers in our state offer programs and services to more than one-and-a-half million individuals annually, including 200,000 students.

Pamela Bell  
Wilmington

Steve Boyden  
Wilmington

Lou Braithwaite  
Lewes

A recent survey conducted by the Division indicated that the majority of Delaware arts organizations find themselves serving an increasing number of constituents while revenue sources from the corporate and private sector are shrinking. And most of those organizations report increased operating deficits due to increasing expenses, despite ongoing operational and programmatic adjustments to minimize the impact.

Joann Browning  
Newark

Richard Givens, II  
Dover

Guillermina Gonzalez  
Wilmington

*Delaware State of the Arts*, a study conducted prior to the current economic crisis, showed that the 33 representative arts organizations were narrowly covering operating expenses on a yearly basis. To keep budgets under control, they have routinely cut expense growth to less than the rate of inflation, while the populations they serve have been increasing. But the general economic failure since then has exacerbated the challenges that the arts sector faces on a daily basis.

Margaret Johnson  
Dover

Gail Lear  
Newark

Elisabeth Poole  
Rehoboth Beach

The Division of the Arts is committed to working with all of Delaware's arts organizations, individually and collectively, to identify their specific needs in continuing to build financial sustainability in order to serve their communities. Delaware's arts and community-based organizations work diligently to provide quality arts programs and services to people from all walks of life, diverse backgrounds, and varying degrees of income. These programs include education outreach to schools, community programming through libraries and state parks, visual and performing arts classes, and civic participation in the creation and presentation of art, music, dance, and theater.

John Ranney  
Lewes

Ruth Sokolowski  
Wilmington

Joyce Hill Stoner  
Wilmington

Deborah Wicks  
Smyrna

Carson Zullinger  
Wilmington

The programs supported by the Division of the Arts are not about putting on a show or mounting an exhibition. They are about engaging citizens in economic development, education, community life, and intergenerational activities. They

are about bringing Delawareans together to improve themselves and their communities, to attract and retain businesses, and to generate both state and local tax revenue. Studies show that public spending in the arts is not an unrewarded expenditure, but rather, a public investment, generating a significant return on the dollar.

So far in FY2009, the Division has supported programming in 26 different communities throughout the state from Bethany Beach to Yorklyn. Arts programs include work with at-risk youth, collaborations between arts organizations and schools, art therapy for special needs students and cancer patients, exhibitions of Delaware artists, and programs by our own nationally recognized professional theater, music, and dance organizations.

The arts in Delaware engage citizens in the workforce, the creative economy, education, and community development. The arts provide a safe haven for youth in after-school programs, sustain our citizenry and quality of life, and serve as a catalyst for economic activity and revitalization during these difficult times.

Governor Markell noted in his position paper, *Ensuring a Vibrant Cultural Legacy for Delaware*:

“With the many pressing concerns facing our state – from health care to education to the environment – the arts risk being lost in the debate. However, the arts are not just a ‘frill’ that we should support only in good economic times. On the contrary, the arts are vital to maintaining a healthy economy.

The arts enrich our lives, our children’s education, and our understanding of other cultures, history, and diverse perspectives. They anchor and help the economy grow by attracting tourists, new residents and new businesses. And they help create healthy, vibrant communities by providing a positive alternative for at-risk young people.”

I come asking you to affirm for the citizens of Delaware that the General Assembly recognizes the important work of the arts community in its contribution to Delaware’s resurgence from these difficult times. Investing in the arts is an investment in economic development, education, tourism, and vibrant communities.