

KEY ADVOCACY ISSUES AT A GLANCE OCTOBER 2020

Find links to advocacy campaigns for these and other issues, and essential online resources, at: americanorchestras.org/advocacy-government.html

COVID-19 RELIEF:

As Congress works on its fourth package of federal relief in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the League partners with the national arts and nonprofit sectors seek support for orchestras, musicians, and the communities they serve.

We urge Congress to swiftly enact expanded employee retention and rehiring tax credits, new Paycheck Protection Program forgivable loans, pension relief, pandemic unemployment benefits, enhanced charitable giving incentives, broadband and public education funding, and direct federal relief funding to support the arts and nonprofit sectors.

- o League Resources: [COVID-19 Action Alert Campaign](#), [League COVID-19 Federal Assistance Resources](#), [Summary of Latest Relief Proposals](#)

PENSION REFORM:

Congress is considering legislative proposals aiming to improve the status of the many underfunded multiemployer pension plans nationwide. The American Federation of Musicians and Employers' Pension Fund Plan (AFM-EPF), in which many orchestras participate, is calling on employer and musician participants to contact Congress in support of immediate relief.

We urge Congress to provide pension relief that will restore the health of the American Federation of Musicians and Employers' Pension Fund now and in the future.

- o Resources: Policy requests are outlined in [the online campaign created by the AFM-EPF](#), which is governed by both musicians and employers.

MUSIC LICENSING:

The Department of Justice is reviewing the consent decrees that regulate two performance rights organizations, ASCAP and BMI, and is considering eliminating them, immediately or over time, or modifying them. The League is partnering with orchestra stakeholders to speak up before the Administration and Congress in pursuit of a fair outcome that will support the interests of orchestras, composers, and the audiences they serve.

We call on the Department of Justice to maintain the protections included in the consent decrees, as orchestras rely upon the license-upon-request and reasonable fee/rate oversight provisions.

- o League Resource: [League August 9, 2019 Comments to Department of Justice](#)

NONPROFIT TAX POLICIES:

Orchestras, in close partnership with the broader nonprofit community, seek to protect and improve incentives for charitable giving. As Congress considers follow-up to tax reform, and as policy leaders intensify their focus on potential new regulations for nonprofit governance, administration, and demonstrating community benefit, the League makes the case for orchestras' public impact.

We urge Congress and the White House to increase the capacity of nonprofit organizations to serve community needs by reinstating charitable giving incentives for all taxpayers through a universal charitable deduction. Congress can also increase the scope and value of charitable donations by supporting the Legacy IRA Act and the Artist-Museum Partnership Act, and can support the creative workforce by reinstating the deduction for unreimbursed business expenses.

- o League Resources: [Public Value Toolkit](#), [League Tax Policy Action Center](#)

VISA AND TAX POLICIES FOR FOREIGN GUEST ARTISTS:

The League is a global leader in helping artists - and the organizations that present them - as they navigate the U.S. visa process and tax withholding requirements. In a coordinated effort with other national performing arts organizations, orchestras are working with the White House, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), State Department, Treasury, and Congress to urge ongoing improvements to the visa process and tax procedures.

We urge Congress to re-introduce the Arts Require Timely Service (ARTS) provision; request that the State Department improve the visa process at consulates worldwide; and, ask Treasury to measurably improve withholding and tax identification procedures.

- o League Resources: [Visa and Tax Assistance](#), [ArtistsfromAbroad.org](#) – The Complete Guide to Immigration and Tax Requirements for Foreign Guest Artists

EDUCATION:

Orchestras work at the national, state, and local levels to build support for music education in schools. The League is a leader in national efforts to preserve arts education funding and to improve arts education policy through implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act.

We urge Congress to fully support the arts as it funds and guides the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act; fully fund the Arts Education programs in the FY21 Labor-HHS Education appropriations bills; require the U.S. Department of Education to comprehensively report the status of arts education in America's public schools.

- o League Resources: [Music Education Advocacy Tools](#), [ESSA Resource Center](#), [Supporting In-School Music Education](#)

TRAVEL WITH MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS:

Orchestras and individual musicians travel with their instruments to bring the experience of live music to audiences in every corner of the globe.

We urge the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Department of Agriculture, to ensure the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species permit process for travel and trade with musical instruments is efficient and affordable. We urge the Department of Transportation and airlines to fully implement and enforce laws protecting musical instruments as carry-on items and cargo.

- o League Resources: [Tips for Traveling by Air](#), [How to Navigate CITES Permit Requirements](#)

INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL EXCHANGE:

The U.S. State Department encourages links among cultural organizations and communities around the world by providing grant opportunities for cultural exchange and promoting cultural diplomacy.

We urge Congress to support funding for the Cultural Programs Division of the State Department in the FY21 State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill.

- o League Resource: [Updates on State Department Funding Opportunities](#)

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS:

Through direct grants, support to state arts agencies, and national leadership initiatives, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is a critical source of federal support for orchestras nationwide. The NEA's FY19 Grants to Organizations included 100 grants to orchestras and communities they serve.

We urge Congress to increase NEA funding in FY21 to support the creation, preservation, and presentation of the arts in America through the NEA's core grant-making programs and leadership and research initiatives.

- o League Resources: [Application Tips for Orchestras](#), [Compilation of NEA Grants to Orchestras](#)