

KEY ADVOCACY UPDATES

JULY 2021

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

COVID-19 RELIEF AND RECOVERY:

As Congress addresses ongoing COVID-19 relief and recovery needs, and considers substantial infrastructure investments, the League partners with the national arts and nonprofit sectors to seek support for orchestras, musicians, and the communities they serve.

We urge Congress to extend the duration of COVID-19 relief provisions; ensure ongoing access to relief as closure orders are lifted; support effective implementation and sufficient funding for the Shuttered Venues Operators Grants program; enact enhanced charitable giving incentives, broadband, and public education funding; and, direct federal recovery and infrastructure policies to support the arts and nonprofit sectors.

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

PENSION REFORM:

Congress and the White House have enacted new policies aiming to improve the status of single-employer pension plans and the many underfunded multiemployer plans. The American Federation of Musicians and Employers' Pension Fund Plan (AFM-EPF), in which many orchestras participate, is eligible for relief, and the rules for implementation are being written.

We urge the Administration to ensure that the Implementation of the American Recovery Plan's pension provisions will provide pension relief that will restore the health of single-employer plans and the American Federation of Musicians and Employers' Pension Fund now and in the future.

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

MUSIC LICENSING:

The U.S. Department of Justice reviews the consent decrees that regulate two performance rights organizations, ASCAP and BMI, and has considered eliminating them, immediately or over time, or modifying them. The League partners 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.

On January 15, 2021 the Department of Justice announced that the consent decrees will remain unchanged. The League will continue to monitor broader policy proposals regarding music licensing and distribution.

- 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 future 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 expanding charitable giving incentives for all taxpayers, including the 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 policy improvements.

We urge USCIS to make visa processing more affordable and reliable; call on Congress to re-introduce the Arts Require Timely Service (ARTS) provision; request that the State Department improve the visa process at consulates worldwide and support National Interest Exceptions for artists; and, ask Treasury to 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 FY22 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 FY22 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, and dedicated COVID-19 relief, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is a critical source of federal support for orchestras nationwide. The NEA's FY20 Grants to Organizations included 101 grants to orchestras and communities they serve.

We urge Congress to increase NEA funding in FY22 to support the creation, preservation, and presentation of the arts in America.

- o League Resources: [Application Tips for Orchestras](#), [Compilation of NEA Grants to Orchestras](#), [COVID-19 Relief](#)