

From the desk of: Peter H. Dunning, Bluemont President, 540.338.4640; peter@bluemont.org

Open Letter from Bluemont protesting the Virginia House Appropriations Committee Proposal To eliminate the Virginia Commission for the Arts by July 1, 2011



Background:

This is a serious situation and needs your immediate attention.

On February 21 the Appropriations Committee of the Virginia House of Delegates voted (15-7) to cut state funding for the Virginia Commission for the Arts by 50% in 2010-11 and to eliminate the agency completely as of July 1, 2011. The Finance Committee of the Virginia Senate (the House counterpart) has voted (15-1) to retain funding for the Virginia Commission of the Arts with equitable 15% budget reductions as proposed in the Biennium as proposed in the Governor's budget proposal.

Now the full House and full Senate will vote on their respective committee proposals for the 2010-2012 budget later this week; The different versions of the 2010-12 budget bill approved by the two house will then go to a Budget Conference Committee to resolve the differences and finally to the Governor for approval.

Bluemont encourages Communities to protest House proposal to eliminate the arts.

As members of the Board of Directors of Bluemont, the Cultural Spirit of our Communities (dba Bluemont Concert Series), we encourage all our members, friends and community partners to protest this ill-conceived proposal by the Virginia House Appropriations Committee to eliminate this remarkably effective agency, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, in the Biennium budget of 2010-2012.

We further encourage Virginia House and Senate members to retain funding for the Virginia Commission of the Arts with equitable 15% budget reductions as proposed in the Biennium as proposed in the Governor's budget proposal.

NOW, TODAY. Contact your state representatives; contact your friends and all those who understand the value of ongoing culture in our communities. These actions must be taken now as the House vote is this Thursday, February 25. Take action now; you may access a listing of current Virginia Senators and Delegates as follows:

- We ask the Virginia House members to delete, from the proposed House amendments to the Budget Bill (House Bill 30), the elimination of all funding for arts grants through the Virginia Commission for the Arts.
- We ask the Virginia House to delete the proposal to eliminate this funding with specific reference to Item 0.9 #2h, paragraph L., reductions to Items 233 and 234; this item begins on page 7 of the House Amendments ([LINK HERE](#)) and the actual elimination of arts grants appears on page 10).
- We ask Virginia House members to retain adequate funding for the Virginia Commission for the Arts with equitable budget reductions as proposed in the Governor's Biennium budget proposal.

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- The arts provide jobs, and cultural tourism as an important part of Virginia tourism promotion efforts.
- Over the past two years the arts have faced large spending cuts, cancellations of performances, staff layoffs, and galleries closing. Minimizing further cuts in state arts funding is essential to the survival of Virginia's cultural infrastructure. Cuts of the magnitude being proposed would cause arts organizations, both large and small, to close their doors throughout the Virginia.
- We urge you to vote against the proposal of the House Appropriations Committee. The small investment the state makes in the arts has a major impact on local economic development, tourism, and education.