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NJ State Council on the Arts Awards More Than 200 Grants

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By Madeline Orton
NJ Today

It may be the middle of summer, but it's an important week for non-profit arts organizations. Leaders from the state's theaters, dance companies, orchestras, museums and more, gathered in Trenton for the New Jersey State Council on the Arts (NJSCA) Annual Meeting to await distribution of grant award letters.

"The general operating support helps us pay the rent and keep the lights on," said Larry Capo, president and CEO of Young Audiences of New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania.

Funding from NJSCA is also leveraged to gain additional funding elsewhere. Anthony LaGruth, artistic director and conductor of the Garden State Philharmonic, explained, "Recognition by the Arts Council, and their financial support, allows us to tell other people that we have sort of a stamp of approval from our own state agency, and it certainly helps with...donors."

This year, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts awarded more than 200 grants to organizations, projects and artists across all 21 counties. With that impact and reach, protecting this pool of money is of paramount importance for the arts community.

When direct funding for the arts and history was eliminated a decade ago in Gov. Jim McGreevy's proposed 2004 budget, the idea for a dedicated revenue source for arts, history and tourism funding arose, and New Jersey's Hotel/Motel Occupancy Fee was born.

"Most of the money that we awarded today came from tourists — people who are staying in hotels and motels throughout New Jersey during the year," said NJSCA Executive Director Nick Paleologos. "The tax that they pay, a little piece of it goes to fund the arts... We do get a small piece from the National Endowment for the Arts, and between the two, that makes up the \$16 million."

That \$16 million is an important number. If that level of funding for the arts isn't met by the state, the tax ceases to exist, as part of a Poison Pill clause written into the tax's legislation to ensure the money generated is used for its intended purpose of funding the arts, history and tourism. Even though tax revenues have increased, the funds allocated to the arts have not risen past the \$16 million minimum level for the last four years. One legislator is working to see that change.

Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttel, who serves on the Tourism and the Arts Committee, said, "Funding the arts is an investment, not only for New Jersey, but for the future... When you see \$16 million producing over \$200 million in spending, it's common sense... And that is why I introduced two pieces of legislation."

One bill would boost allocation to the arts by nearly 50 percent, restoring it to its high-water mark in 2005.

"We need to raise that level to continue to invest in New Jersey, the economy and the future of this state," said the assemblywoman.

The arts community, which has been working on similar legislation that would be proposed to take



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A bill introduced last month by Assemblyman Wayne P. DeAngelo, a Mercer County Democrat, would change the law and permit car dealers to open on Sundays throughout most of the state — but not in Bergen County, where the blue laws would still apply.

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A bill introduced last month by Assemblyman Wayne P. DeAngelo, a Mercer County Democrat, would change the law and permit car dealers to open on Sundays throughout most of the state — but not in Bergen County, where the blue laws would still apply.

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Days before Newark Mayor Cory Booker announced he wanted to run for the U.S. Senate seat held by Frank Lautenberg in December, the two men's top aides tried to negotiate over the phone.

place over a three-year timeline, looks forward to working with Huttle to achieve this goal. In the meantime, organizations receiving State Council funding look forward to putting their grant money to use.

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Images of majestic seaside homes ripped from their foundations in the coastal town of Mantoloking were among the most enduring to emerge from Superstorm Sandy. But homeowners in wealthy Shore communities are significantly less likely to get a share of New Jersey's federal recovery aid compared with residents in less affluent towns like Moonachie and Little Ferry, an analysis of state data shows.

Tweets section with two tweets from @NJTVonline. The first tweet is about a special Senate election candidates' night. The second tweet is about the NJ State Council on the Arts giving out more than 200 grants.



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