

**National Arts Policy Roundtable – 11.21.08**  
**NYU Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Policy**  
*Hosted by the Student Network Exploring Arts and Culture*

**Overarching themes:**

- The existence of an arts policy committee and a presidential arts platform is a remarkable step in the right direction, especially in terms of arts education, health care for artists, and cultural diplomacy.
- Support for arts education on a federal level is important, but current platform lacks policies on 1.) arts as required curriculum in public schools, and 2.) creating incentives for student and school participation, especially in view of limitations of "No Child Left Behind" requirements.
- Current platform is largely focused on public-private partnerships and individual artists, but lacks policies on and mention of nonprofit arts organizations and, in particular, those without an educational component or capability.
- Artist-Museum Partnership Act and support for healthcare for artists directly impacts individual artists on a national scale, but missing from the platform is a policy shift in NEA's funding to again support individual artists; would appear that concerns about censorship are still an issue but should not stand in the way of a return to top-down support for boldness and innovation in the arts.
- Cultural diplomacy must be reinvigorated as a two-way exchange; federal programs must be sensitive to foreign cultures when selecting American arts for sending abroad. Two concerns: 1.) Exchanges might be better left decentralized among individual artists and arts organizations to avoid homogenization; and 2.) Resources must be committed to develop substantive work to go abroad.
- While there is little interest in creating a U.S. cultural ministry, a new federal position under the west wing's Public Liaison Office should be created to represent a diverse cultural constituency, provide a "seat at the table" for arts. In addition, a federal coordinating committee for the arts could link all federal agencies at the staff level that have/could have arts issues as part of their agenda, e.g., labor dept, small business, commerce, interior.

**Interesting Comments:**

The arts policy committee did not include in its platform many submitted recommendations, such as the creation of more localized arts councils, national community arts block grants, tax credits for "cultural investors," entrepreneurial training for artists via the Dept. of Labor, and arts as a component of the Small Business Administration.

Throughout the election, the Obama-Biden presidential campaign:

- a.) decidedly did not mention the arts at any campaign events; and
- b.) listed arts under "additional issues" on its website, whereas urban policy was a main issue.

**Promising Indicators:**

President-elect Obama has experience advocating for small community organizations with arts components, as well as major cultural organizations in Chicago.

A good policy precedent was enacted in Ohio, ranked 30th among states for NEA funding: Prop 18, which passed by 60%, added 1% tax on cigarettes to be spent on the arts (an anticipated \$20M return to statewide arts funding).