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STATE POETS LAUREATE SPEAK OUT AGAINST ARTS ATTACKS

As present and past poets laureate of our respective states, we affirm the collective importance of each state's literary arts in embodying our national vision. We are deeply concerned by actions of several state governments that have greatly diminished the arts. Drastic funding and staffing cuts have resulted in the loss of federal and regional matching funds, and by extension, infrastructure and programming for the arts in schools, arts centers, community centers, and many other venues. In specific, we are dismayed by these events:

- ♣ **KANSAS:** The state of Kansas, under Governor Sam Brownback, now has no state arts funding, which has resulted in a decision from the NEA to provide no federal matching funds. In May, Governor Brownback laid off all staff of the state arts agency, the Kansas Arts Commission, and closed the office on no notice. He then line-item-vetoed funding for the Kansas Arts Commission despite that funding being the will of the Kansas House and Senate, and the people of Kansas. The poet laureate program continues through the efforts of the current poet laureate, Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, who is fundraising and working to find a new organizational home for this program.
- ♣ **WISCONSIN:** In January, 2011 newly elected Governor Scott Walker failed to renew the Wisconsin Poet Laureate Commission. Since 2000 the commission had overseen the selection process and supported the day-to-day service of the state poet laureate to promote Wisconsin poets and poetry. In April, 2011 the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters took over sponsorship of the Poet Laureate Commission, guaranteeing funded Wisconsin poet laureates for years to come, including the present poet laureate, Bruce Dethlefsen.

While we come from diverse states, we hold in common the belief that the literary arts offer our citizens essential opportunities to invigorate and enlighten our lives, making for a better educated and more involved public able to share their voices in shaping our future.

We call to legislative bodies in all affected states to do all possible to restore their state literary arts and arts overall.

1. Peggy Shumaker, Alaska State Writer Laureate, 2010-2012
2. Dave Mason, Colorado Poet Laureate,
3. Dick Allen, Connecticut State Poet Laureate, 2010-2015
4. JoAnn Balingit, Delaware Poet Laureate, 2008-2011
5. Norbert Krapf, Indiana Poet Laureate, 2008-2010
6. Karen Kovacik, Indiana Poet Laureate, 2012-2013
7. Mary Swander, Iowa Poet Laureate, 2009-2013
8. Jonathan Holden, Kansas Poet Laureate, 2005-2007
9. Denise Low, Kansas Poet Laureate, 2007-2009
10. Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, Kansas Poet Laureate, 2009-2012
11. Maureen Morehead, Kentucky Poet Laureate, 2011
12. Betsy Sholl, Maine Poet Laureate, 2009-2014
13. Walter Bargen, Missouri Poet Laureate, 2008-2010
14. Marie Harris, New Hampshire Poet Laureate, 1999-2004
15. Patricia Fargnoli, New Hampshire Poet Laureate, 2006-2009
16. Walter Butts, New Hampshire Poet Laureate, 2009-2014

17. Jim Barnes, Oklahoma Poet Laureate, 2009-2010
18. Lisa Starr, Rhode Island Poet Laureate, 2007-2012
19. Marjory Wentworth, South Carolina Poet Laureate, life term
20. Dave Allen Evan, South Dakota Poet Laureate, 2002
21. Dave Parsons, Texas Poet Laureate, 2010
22. Paul Ruffin, Texas Poet Laureate, 2009
23. Kelly Cherry, Poet Laureate of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 2010-2012
24. Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda, Poet Laureate of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 2006-2008
25. Samuel Green, Washington State Poet Laureate, 2007-2009
26. Bruce Dethlefsen, Wisconsin Poet Laureate, 2011-2013
27. Marilyn L. Taylor, Wisconsin Poet Laureate, 2009-2011
28. David Romtvedt, Wyoming Poet Laureate, 2004-2011