

## NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Statement by Earl A. Powell III, Director of the National Gallery of Art, to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, United States House of Representatives, April 14, 2010

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee, it is my pleasure to be here today. Thank you for the opportunity to meet with the Subcommittee about the National Gallery of Art.

The National Gallery's mission is to serve the country by preserving, collecting, exhibiting, and encouraging the understanding of works of art at an exemplary level. The Gallery is not only an art museum of the first rank but an institution of higher learning, created and sustained by the federal government and the private sector. In fiscal year 2009, we welcomed some 4.8 million visitors from throughout the country and abroad.

The National Gallery was founded with an unprecedented gift to the nation of Andrew W. Mellon's donation of his art collection and the funds to construct what we now call the West Building. The federal commitment to operate the Gallery originates in the 1937 Joint Resolution of Congress which pledged that the United States would provide funds for the upkeep, administrative expenses, and costs of operations, including the protection and care for the works of art given to the nation, so that the Gallery would at all times be properly maintained and be open to the public at no charge.

This federal commitment has been matched by private donors, who, following Andrew Mellon's lead, have given generously to create America's National Gallery. The West and East Buildings, as well as the Sculpture Garden, have been constructed solely with private funds and were gifts to the nation. All works of art in the National Gallery collection have been acquired by donation or through purchase with private funds. Our collection of international stature has been created by the generosity of donors who have presented the nation with more than 117,000 works of art, creating one of the world's premier art museums.

The Special Exhibitions Program, the most critical part of the Gallery's educational mission, is an example of the public and private sectors working together for the benefit of the American public. Major works of art are brought together from public and private collections around the world for the many millions of visitors to the Gallery and to our web site. We play a significant leadership role nationally and internationally through our involvement in the organization and presentation of special exhibitions; more than half of the special exhibitions we organize travel to art museums outside Washington.

Our public educational initiatives feature programs designed for many audiences—scholars, teachers, students of all ages, and local, national and international visitors. Each week, visitors to the Gallery can attend a variety of lectures, tours, concerts and films. Our work with school districts includes tours designed for all grade levels and high school seminars for local teens. In fiscal year 2009, more than 40,000 students took part in over 2,200 programs. Our

national teacher training institute is held each summer in addition to teacher workshops held throughout the academic year. We also hosted 123 specially planned family programs for some 13,500 attendees, including summer programs for families with children ages eight to eleven. In addition, our extensive loan program of educational resources reached a viewing audience of more than 30 million through elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, museums, and television stations in towns and cities across the country in fiscal year 2009. Our Web site extended the Gallery experience to more than 16.7 million virtual visitors during last fiscal year.

Another element of the Gallery's educational mission is scholarship in art history and the consequent enrichment of higher education across the country. The Gallery's Art Research Library is one of the finest and most respected art libraries in the world. The comprehensive, in-depth collection comprises some 368,000 volumes on the history, theory, and criticism of art and architecture as well as the rare book collection with more than 8,500 volumes. The Art Research Library is used by some 2,200 members of the public each year as well as scholars, visiting fellows, and professors associated with the Gallery's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts.

The Gallery's Conservation division is one of the largest and most comprehensive of the world's art museums, with laboratories for conserving paintings, sculpture, works on paper, and textiles as well as for scientific research. The most dramatic advances in art conservation take place in the Gallery's Scientific Research lab using highly advanced technologies and sophisticated equipment. By utilizing carefully researched conservation techniques, the Gallery also fulfills its mission of protecting the works of art in its care. Our conservators are active with colleagues at the art museums around the country, sharing techniques and recent research developments.

The West and East Buildings that comprise the National Gallery are landmark buildings, as significant as the great works of art which they house. The West Building opened in 1941 and the East Building opened in 1978. It is not surprising that the Gallery faces a steady, ongoing program of repairs and renovations to keep these buildings functioning efficiently, securely and safely. Recognizing that the buildings were reaching an age at which many components were in need of major repair or replacement, and that some infrastructure systems were reaching the end of their useful lives, we undertook in 1997 the development of the long-range and comprehensive Master Facilities Plan. It provides an organized framework for an effective implementation of repair, restoration, and renovation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Congress and the Appropriations subcommittee, committee, and staff for your support of our repair, restoration, and renovation program.

Funds to complete the repair of the National Gallery's East Building façade are included in the FY 2011 budget request. As first discovered in 2005, the large stone veneer panels on the East Building exterior began tilting at the top, and in some extreme cases were displaced over one inch. After hiring a forensic structural engineer to investigate the cause, we concluded that

we must undertake remedial repair work as soon as possible to replace the supports for the 16,200 panels that cover the East building exterior. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for supporting this project. Our FY 2010 budget included \$40 million to develop construction documents and begin construction; the FY 2011 budget includes the funding necessary to complete the repair of the façade by FY 2013 as planned.

The President's Fiscal Year 2011 budget for the National Gallery is \$162.8 million. It includes \$114.6 million for Salaries and Expenses, an increase of \$3.8 million, and \$48.2 million for Repair, Restoration, and Renovation, a net decrease of \$8 million.

The National Gallery provides it millions of visitors with an enjoyable and rewarding experience with the world's artistic heritage through the collection and special exhibitions. The National Gallery is America's art museum and we hope every American will share in this gift. We look forward to continuing the vision and the high standards of excellence established by Andrew W. Mellon and the 1937 Joint Resolution of Congress.

Mr. Chairman and Subcommittee members, the Gallery is very appreciative and grateful for your continuing support. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have about the National Gallery, its operations, and its programs.