



## **PUBLIC FUNDING FOR THE ARTS**

Adopted: 10/20/81

### **Position Statement**

#### ***The Montana Association of Churches supports:***

1. Full access to the arts by all Montanans in their schools, communities and public institutions;
2. Increased State funding for the arts;
3. The development of economic and social policies which will;
  - (a) encourage the arts as an essential dimension of life, and
  - (b) enable artists to live and work in Montana;
4. The continued use for cultural and aesthetic purposes of monies from interest on the Coal Tax Fund;
5. The distribution of the above funds for cultural and aesthetic purposes in a manner which gives due consideration to all areas and constituencies of the State (both rural and urban).

### **SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

Throughout the ages, the church has been a patron and preserver of the arts and the artists. It is not surprising that the church today should also concern itself with the arts in our society. We are recognizing the development of the whole person as a cultural, social, political, and spiritual being. A part of this wholeness is the potential for magnificent creative activity within each of us as we respond to the Creator God. Experiencing and

responding to the arts within and around us, we are given insight and inspiration to act in God's world. The churches in Montana can speak to this need as it affects the priorities of our society.

Public funding has a direct relationship to accessibility. When we begin to deal with questions of full access to the arts, we must have the broadest possible participation in mind. We believe that everyone has the right to:

- make art;
- have access to artistic experiences;
- enjoy an aesthetically rich life, and even,
- to define what art is.

The presence of public education and libraries in our society makes clear the importance of accessibility to education. In the same way, appropriate use of public money can influence full access to the arts.

The ideal system of support for the arts in our free society seems to be a combination of public, private and corporate money. Private philanthropy has sustained much of our cultural treasure, and corporate investment has helped to develop an art market. But it is usually public money which will risk the funding of art on the growing edge, or developing programs in profitably unstable areas. In the last decade, it has been the unique combination of funding which has nurtured the growth of the arts across the nation.

In Montana, the public money has come through the Federal grants to the Montana Arts Council. These in turn have generated an unprecedented match in private and corporate money, enabling communities to sponsor touring groups, establish artists-in-residence, and develop varieties of visual and performing arts programs. However, Montana ranks 54th out of 55 States and territories in per capita State appropriations for the arts. It is the state commitment to funding for the arts which is missing from the picture. Continued development of the arts in Montana is dependent upon a higher priority in state appropriations. This would provide essential

money, and also constitute a strong philosophical statement by the State government that the arts are important in the lives of its citizens.

We support and encourage the arts as a way of making a living in Montana. As public funding and public policies support the arts as a priority in our society, the individual artist will find Montana an economically viable place in which to work. The arts are good business - high value, self-employed, labor intensive, clean, good for communities, with a positive economic impact. We encourage policies which will improve marketing, small loan benefits, tax incentives, and programs for public art.

We support the use of coal tax interest money for the arts. It seems most fitting that the benefits from one natural resource should be used to nurture and develop the creative resources for our citizens. We are concerned that this commitment be maintained, and that through appropriate guidelines, the cultural and aesthetic needs of the people of Montana will be met most beneficially.

There are many areas of concern in the arts, but we feel these few issues would help to build a basis of support which would recognize the importance of the arts in our lives and help them to flourish in our State.

---

\*Section 15-35-108 (h) (i) MCA. Authorized by HB 550, 46th Legislature.

**Montana Association of Churches**

American Baptist Churches of the Northwest \* Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in Montana  
Episcopal Church Diocese of Montana \* Evangelical Lutheran Church in America-Montana Synod  
Presbyterian Church (USA)-Glacier Presbytery \* Presbyterian Church (USA)-Yellowstone Presbytery  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Great Falls-Billings \* Roman Catholic Diocese of Helena  
United Church of Christ of Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference \* United Methodist Church Yellowstone Conference