



Long Island Traditions
382 Main Street
Port Washington, NY 11050
(516) 767-8803
Fax (516) 767-8805
E-Mail: litrad@i-2000.com
www.longislandtraditions.org

November 30, 2007

Mr. Paul Francis
Director of the Budget and Senior Advisor to the Governor of NYS
State Capitol – Room 113
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Mr. Francis:

Long Island Traditions is a regional non-profit organization that documents, presents and preserves the traditional folk arts and architecture of this culturally and historically complex place. As a folklorist who has worked on Long Island since 1987, I have witnessed major changes in the presentation and preservation of the rich heritage that plays a major part in local residents' lives. Examples include the destruction and devaluation of historic sites and structures, ranging from modest bungalows in waterfront communities, farms and barns in both Nassau and Suffolk counties, and state owned historic sites. Long Island traditional artists including master immigrant composers, Native American drummers and quilters, and traditional fishermen work with local schools that have lost critical funding for arts in education programs. At the same time we see increasing support for cultural programs in urban school districts, despite the fact that Long Island contributes a disproportionate amount to the state budget. In addition state funding for the arts, which has increased under Governor Spitzer, for which we are grateful, is still at the same level per person as it was almost 20 years ago, \$2.47 per person. As we all know, a key component of a healthy community is a robust local culture, one that supports the local and regional economy of Long Island.

To address these issues we support the following measures, as proposed by the Preservation League of New York and the Alliance of New York State Arts Organizations:

- ❖ Expansion of the NYS Rehabilitation Tax Credit to include endangered properties considered eligible for the state and national register of historic places in middle income communities;
- ❖ Additional funding for historic site surveys at OPRHP, NYSCA and to local professionally staffed historic preservation groups
- ❖ Creation of an education program at OPRHP that will provide funding for professionally staffed historic and preservation groups working with schools;

- ❖ Direct funding to schools on a per capita basis through the Department of Education for cultural arts and historic places programs working with professionally staffed cultural and preservation groups with paid education staff;
- ❖ A \$54 million appropriation to NYSCA for direct program funding, equal to \$2.80 per person.

As you know there are many people who come to New York State including Long Island for the high quality of cultural and educational programs. These suggestions are extremely modest in cost, with long lasting benefits, tangible and intangible. New York is at a critical junction concerning its long-term commitment to educating children about their family and community's heritage and culture, past and present. We hope you will rise to the expectation of its residents, so that future generations can carry on and preserve the ordinary traditions of everyday residents. On Long Island development pressures are forcing many historic homeowners to move, while new owners tear down the site. Through survey and education, this situation can be transformed so that New York can join nationally recognized preservation programs in North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland as a beacon for heritage. By supporting school based cultural arts programs on a per capita basis, New York will teach its future citizens that pride in family traditions and culture is rich, diverse, and found everywhere.

Sincerely,

Nancy Solomon
Executive Director