



For Immediate Release

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Poetry Out Loud State Contest cancelled in response to Governor directive

Salem, Oregon – Due to Governor Kate Brown’s directive to cancel all non-essential school associated group activities to slow the spread of COVID-19, the Oregon Arts Commission is cancelling the Poetry Out Loud State Contest scheduled for Friday, March 13, in Salem.

“Our highest priority is the health and safety of our students and their families,” said Deb Vaughn, the Arts Commission’s arts education/Poetry Out Loud coordinator.

Governor Brown issued a news release late on Wednesday directing that all non-essential school-associated gatherings and group activities — such as group parent meetings, field trips and competitions, be cancelled.

The nine state contestants, their families and teachers were notified of the cancellation this morning. The possibility of rescheduling is dependent on direction from the Governor’s Office and the National Endowment for the Arts.

“While we are disappointed not to see their presentations, the students who put their energy into this program each have three poems learned by heart, and that is something they can always be proud of,” said Vaughn.

Each of the students will be sent a copy of Oregon Poet Laureate Kim Stafford’s book “Reunion of the Rare,” which was to have been presented at the event, to continue to encourage their exploration of poetry.

Poetry Out Loud is a national contest for high school students, organized in Oregon by the Oregon Arts Commission in collaboration with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation.

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The Oregon Arts Commission provides leadership, funding and arts programs through its grants, special initiatives and services. Nine commissioners, appointed by the Governor, determine arts needs and establish policies for public support of the arts. The Arts Commission became part of Business Oregon (formerly Oregon Economic and Community Development Department) in 1993, in recognition of the expanding role the arts play in the broader social, economic and educational arenas of Oregon communities. In 2003, the Oregon legislature moved the operations of the Oregon Cultural Trust to the Arts Commission, streamlining operations and making use of the Commission's expertise in grantmaking, arts and cultural information and community cultural development.

The Arts Commission is supported with general funds appropriated by the Oregon legislature and with federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts as well as funds from the Oregon Cultural Trust. More information about the Oregon Arts Commission is available online at: www.oregonartscommission.org.