



**THE
KENNEDY
CENTER**

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**The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and
Women in Government (WIG) Select**

North Dakota Senator Carolyn Nelson

as the

**Inaugural Recipient of the
“*Outstanding Woman State Legislator Supporting the Arts*” Award**

Washington, D.C.—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and Women in Government (WIG) today announced that North Dakota Senator Carolyn Nelson is the first-ever recipient of the “Outstanding Woman State Legislator Supporting the Arts” award, created to recognize a woman state legislator for outstanding support of the arts in her state. The award will be presented at Women in Government’s national conference on November 8, 2017, in Washington, D.C.

Senator Nelson was nominated by Mary Schneider and Pamela K. Anderson of the North Dakota State House of Representatives, and selected from a pool of other female legislators. Nominees must demonstrate a significant contribution in support of the arts, evidence of promoting policies that support the arts, collaborate with cultural and education partners to support the arts, and promote the value and importance of the arts in public life.

In the public policy realm, Senator Nelson championed the arts as a leader in the local and state PTA, Board of Education, and throughout her 12-term legislative career. Among her

many achievements and accomplishments at the state and local levels, she successfully fought for a State Historical Society in addition to the state archives, which allowed many nonprofits, particularly arts groups, a place for their historical records. With a degree in music education, Senator Nelson has integrated the arts into her family, political, professional, family, and community life. She served an international role as the Governor's Musical Ambassador to Norway in 1976, and currently serves as a board member of the famed International Music Camp program which brings together young performance artists at the International Peace Gardens. She also co-founded the North Dakota Coalition for Public Education in 1980, where she promoted performance and hands-on participation of children of all ages in the arts. Her engagement and achievements are local, state, national and international in scope and have generated critical access, funding, and other resources for children, adults and community organizations.

"Senator Nelson exemplifies the leadership that women bring to the table," said Colorado Sen. Nancy Todd, chair of WIG's Board of Directors. "At home, in the community, in the legislature, nationally and around the world, Senator Nelson has enhanced thousands if not millions of lives through the arts."

"The arts impact all facets of our lives." said Mario Rossero, Senior Vice President of Education at the Kennedy Center. "As the nation's performing arts center, the Kennedy Center sees how the arts bring people together to share an experience that knows no boundaries and enriches creative thinking, collaboration, cultural-understanding, and communication. The commitment and dedication of Senator Nelson in advocating for the arts at every level is inspiring and the Kennedy Center congratulates her on receiving this inaugural award."

As the nation's performing arts center, the Kennedy Center partnered with WIG to encourage support of the arts at the state or local level through this inaugural award. WIG is the premier organization providing leadership opportunities, expert forums, educational resources and opportunities to address and resolve complex policy issues to women state legislators.

About Senator Carolyn Nelson

Senator Carolyn Nelson was elected to the North Dakota House of Representatives in 1986 and 1992, and has represented District 21 in the state Senate since 1994. She served as Senate Assistant Minority Leader from 2006 to 2010, the first woman senator in state history to hold a senate leadership position. She served three terms as caucus chair (whip) and received the WILL Pacesetter Award from the Women's Action in New Directions and the Women Legislator's Lobby in 2007. Other recognitions include ND Bar Association Legislative Service Award (2000), ND Student Association Legislator of the Year (2001), Veterans' Coordinating Council Outstanding Legislator (2001), Golden Apple Award from the ND Council of Educational Leaders (2015) and Exemplary Leader award from Planned Parenthood ND, SD,WI (2015).

Senator Nelson served as President of the National Federation of Music Clubs from 2011 to 2015. She has been a member of the NFMC Board of Directors since 2003 and is also a member of the AAUW, Fargo Roundtable, Handbell Ringers of America, and First United Methodist Church. She is a life member of the National and ND PTA, the National Federation of Music Clubs, Sigma Alpha Iota music fraternity, and the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi. She received both her BS (math and music education) and MS (math education and administration) from North Dakota State University, where she retired as a senior lecture emeritus of mathematics in 2002.

About Women In Government

Women In Government Foundation, Inc., headquartered in Washington, D.C., is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of women state legislators. Led by a national [Board of Directors](#) consisting of 13 state legislators, WIG provides leadership opportunities, networking, expert forums, and educational resources to address and resolve complex public policy issues to all women state legislators. Women In Government leads the nation with a bold, courageous and passionate vision that empowers and mobilizes all women legislators to effect sound policy in areas such as healthcare, education, energy, the environment, transportation, criminal justice and the arts. To learn more about Women In Government, go to: <http://www.womeningovernment.org>.

About The Kennedy Center

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is America's living memorial to President Kennedy. Under the guidance of Chairman [David M. Rubenstein](#), and President [Deborah F. Rutter](#), the nine theaters and stages of the nation's busiest performing arts facility attract more than three million visitors to more than 2,000 performances each year, while center-related touring productions, television, and radio broadcasts reach 40 million more around the world. With its artistic affiliates, the [National Symphony Orchestra](#) and [Washington National Opera](#), the Center has produced more than 300 theatrical productions, and dozens of new ballets, operas, and musical works, in addition to hosting numerous international cultural festivals. The education programs of the Kennedy Center, including those of its affiliate [VSA](#), the international organization on arts and disability, have become models for communities across the country and have unlocked the door to learning for millions of young people. The Center and its affiliates stage more than 400 free

performances by artists from throughout the world each year on the Center's main stages, and every day of the year at 6 p.m. on its Millennium Stages, which are also streamed live, online. To learn more about the Kennedy Center, please visit www.kennedy-center.org.

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