

# RANCHO SANTA FE REVIEW

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## Maestro's Podium An Arts Czar?

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There has been much buzz about the concept put forth by jazz legend, Quincy Jones, about having a Secretary of Culture or "Arts Czar" added to the President's cabinet. It has been gaining momentum, with almost 100,000 online signatures supporting such a proposal.

Amidst the firestorm of discussion concerning the degree which government should be involved in our daily lives, this bold idea is worthy of at least some discussion.

As we have seen with past civilizations, after the governments have collapsed and cities overtaken by decay, the only real lasting legacy that can be passed on to the future generations are ideas. Whether scientific or artistic, ideas have helped man to evolve from a primitive creature to an enlightened being. While there have been mighty empires and emperors, not all have met the test of historic significance.

What will be our legacy? Will it be a new brand of democracy? Perhaps it will be something technological. How will our artistic achievements fare? If time came to an end today, jazz, rock and roll, and film might be among America's most unique and influential art forms, but it's important to remember that they began and continue to thrive without government intervention.

So do we need government advocacy for the arts?

I believe the answer is yes, and not for the sake of the artists, but rather for our own cultural souls. We have government lob-



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byists for everything from pharmaceutical corporations to banks. Why couldn't we have a seat at the table for something that truly gives our lives meaning and significance?

One problem that arts organizations have is that they are quite inept in arguing their own case in a world that's focused on the practicalities of "guns and butter." It is easy to recognize the urgency for finding a cure for cancer over the need to fund an opera premiere or a park sculpture. However, if we completely neutralize ourselves because of the constant noise of "real world" issues, we will lose our appreciation and sensitivity for beauty and creative genius.

Having an "Arts Czar" in itself is not the solution to reinvigorating arts organizations to be more relevant and desirable to a nation that is increasingly interested in disposable information and entertainment, but it is a first step to reclaiming our place in history as being the home to some of the world's greatest writers, dancers, musicians and visual artists. It's time that we grew up and realized all of the responsibilities and possibilities of being the greatest civilization in history.