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**NEA CHAIRMAN ROCCO LANDESMAN AND POETRY FOUNDATION PRESIDENT JOHN BARR
ANNOUNCE THE 2011 NATIONAL FINALS OF POETRY OUT LOUD, APRIL 28-29, 2011**

Award-winning actress Kerry Washington to host Finals, which will be webcast live

WASHINGTON, DC – From Fairbanks, Alaska, to Knoxville, Tennessee, 53 students from across the country will converge on Washington, DC on April 28-29, 2011 to compete in the National Finals of Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest, the nation’s largest youth poetry recitation competition. These young competitors advanced from a field of more than 365,000 students who tested their skills in poetry recitation in more than 2,000 schools nationwide. The top finalists and their schools will receive \$50,000 in awards. Award-winning actress Kerry Washington, a member of the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, will host the Friday evening finals. Guest judges for the National Finals are poets Valerie Martínez, Thomas Sayers Ellis, and Brian Turner, actress and author Amber Tamblyn, playwright/actress/director Aditi Brennan Kapil, and Michael Kahn, Artistic Director of the Shakespeare Theatre Company.

Now in its sixth year of national competition, Poetry Out Loud is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation which encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools students across the country. Poetry Out Loud gives students an opportunity to master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

The 53 champions will gather at the Poetry Out Loud semifinals on Thursday, April 28, from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the historic Lincoln Theatre, 1215 U Street, NW, Washington, DC. Nine finalists will advance to the National Finals, also held at the Lincoln Theatre, on Friday, April 29, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Both events are free and open to the public; no tickets or reservations are required. Both the semifinals and the finals can be viewed remotely through a [one-time-only live webcast](#). Follow Poetry Out Loud on Twitter at @PoetryOutLoud and @NEAarts, hashtag #POLnews. For more information on the event and webcast, visit arts.gov or call 202-682-5001.

“Our research shows that young people who get arts education today are much more likely to be the arts participants of tomorrow,” said NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman. “Through Poetry Out Loud, we’ve heard many stories from students who talk about falling in love with poetry ... for life.”

“To memorize a great poem is to make a friend of it for life,” said Poetry Foundation President John Barr. “From the stage, the participants in Poetry Out Loud recite their poems with a joy all their own. We, the audience, listen and are moved.”

Poetry Out Loud Partnerships

The National Finals are the culmination of efforts by many partners. As national partners, the NEA and the Poetry Foundation have contributed support for administration of the program, educational materials, and awards for both the state and national finals. State arts agencies have implemented the program in high schools nationwide and organized state competitions, often in collaboration with local arts organizations. The Poetry Out Loud National Finals are administered by Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation.





Schools that are interested in registering for next year's Poetry Out Loud should contact their state arts agency. More information is available at www.poetryoutloud.org.

Educational Materials

The NEA and the Poetry Foundation provide free, standards-based curriculum materials for Poetry Out Loud, which include poetry anthologies containing more than 650 classic and contemporary poems, a teacher's guide, video footage of performances from the National Finals, and audio tracks about the art of recitation. Schools are welcome to download these resources at www.poetryoutloud.org.

Contests and Awards

Using a pyramid structure, Poetry Out Loud starts with classroom and schoolwide activities and contests between September 2010 and February 2011. State contests were held by mid-March; the 53 champions of contests in every state, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Washington, DC compete at the National Finals. The Poetry Out Loud National Finals will present a total of \$50,000 in awards and school stipends for the purchase of poetry books. Awards include \$20,000 for the Poetry Out Loud National Champion, and \$10,000 and \$5,000 for the second- and third-place finalists. Each state-level final has awarded \$1,000 in cash awards to the champion, runner up, and their schools. In total, Poetry Out Loud will award more than \$100,000 to state- and national-level winners.

Fast facts about Poetry Out Loud 2010-2011

- Total participating students in the 2010-2011 school year: 365,855
- Total participating schools in the 2010-2011 school year: 2,255; Total participating teachers, 5,020
- Total number of students nationwide who have competed in Poetry Out Loud over the past six years: 1.2 million.
- States with the highest number of participating students in 2011: California, Florida, Washington.
- Participating State Schools for the Deaf or Deaf and Blind: Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Oregon.
- Most frequently performed—and now retired—poem from the Poetry Out Loud anthology:
"Still I Rise," by Maya Angelou.

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About Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation supports the richness and diversity of the region's arts resources and promotes wider access to the art and artists of the region, nation, and world. To learn more about MAAF and its programs and services, visit www.midatlanticarts.org.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the NEA at www.arts.gov.

About the Poetry Foundation

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine, is an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. It exists to discover and celebrate the best poetry and to place it before the largest possible audience. The Poetry Foundation seeks to be a leader in shaping a receptive climate for poetry by developing new audiences, creating new avenues for delivery, and encouraging new kinds of poetry through innovative literary prizes and programs. For more information, please visit www.poetryfoundation.org.

