

GRANT FOR COMMUNITY READING INITIATIVE AVAILABLE; APPLICATIONS DUE FEBRUARY 12, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Meredith Sullivan

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Rep. Castle Encourages Eligible Organizations to Apply

Delaware Congressman Mike Castle today highlighted the National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) Big Read initiative and urges community organizations throughout Delaware to take advantage of this innovative grant program. The Big Read initiative promotes both the enjoyment of reading and the strength of communities and provides communities with a wide range of interactive resources and programs that center on one selected book.

Findings of a 2004 NEA study entitled Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America, indicated that literary reading in America is on the decline and getting worse, especially among young populations. The study spurred the creation of the Big Read initiative, which is expected to reach approximately 400 communities nationwide by 2008.

"This is a forward-thinking program that helps address the declining interest in reading, in a manner which fosters community growth and unity," said Rep. Castle, senior Republican of the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education. "I am hopeful that this program will flourish in Delaware and encourage organizations throughout the state to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity and apply for a grant through the Big Read initiative."

Applications for all Big Read programs taking place between September 2008 and June 2009 are due by February 12,

2008. Additional information, including application requirements, is available on the NEA's Big Read website at <http://www.neabigread.org/>. Interested organizations may also contact Arts Midwest representative: Christine Taylor at (612) 341-0755 x21 or christine@artsmidwest.org.

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