

SILENT SHAKESPEARE

QUICK STATS

- ✘ **CONFERENCE:** Spending
- ✘ **TEAM:** National Endowment for the Arts
- **FUMBLE:** Tens of thousands of dollars
- **HOW TO RECOVER THE BALL:** Require a thorough disclosure and transparency process for federal grants to ensure funding focuses on items of national interest

In a year when American families had to work 114 days to earn enough money to cover their complete yearly tax bill,⁷ NEA awarded a state partner—the Virginia Commission for the Arts—\$683,600 for various arts-related projects.⁸ The program supported tens of thousands of dollars in funding for silent adaptations of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and others at a Washington, DC-area theater.⁹ The funding went to support the production costs of the Synetic Theater’s taxpayer-funded silent Shakespeare series. Synetic Theater received its highest recent award of \$60,700 in 2013 from NEA’s partner, Virginia Commission for the Arts.¹⁰ Synetic also received \$58,800¹¹ (2011-2012), \$54,900 (2012-2013),¹² and \$35,100 (2015-2016).¹³

William Shakespeare was lauded for many things: his meter, his verse, his complicated characters. Generations of families have come together to enjoy productions of Shakespeare’s sonnets and plays by film companies, local theaters, and high school drama classes. But was Polonius right in *Hamlet* when he said, “Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice”?

James Bovard published a piece in *The Wall Street Journal* on July 13, 2015, entitled, “A Silenced Shakespeare in Washington: Shakespeare without puns is like French cooking without butter.”¹⁴ Performing Shakespeare’s plays using private funds or state-funded arts programs might be even “butter.”

For more information, please visit:

[Virginia Commission for the Arts – Synetic Theater](#)

[Virginia Commission for the Arts – 2015-2016 Grant Awards](#)

[Virginia Commission for the Arts – 2013-2014 Grant Awards](#)

[Virginia Commission for the Arts – 2012-2013 Grant Awards](#)

[Virginia Commission for the Arts – 2011-2012 Grant Awards](#)

[The Washington Post: National Endowment for the Arts awards \\$74 million in grants](#)

[The Wall Street Journal: A Silenced Shakespeare in Washington](#)

[Tax Foundation: Tax Freedom Day 2015](#)

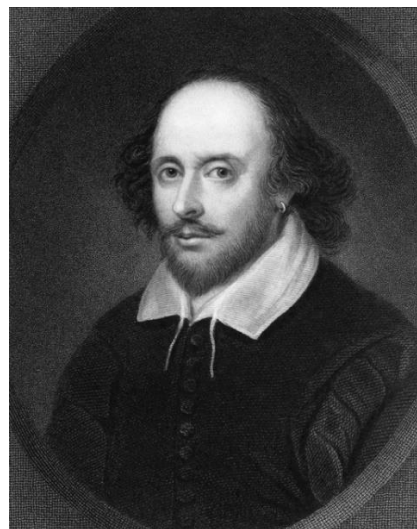


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RECOVERY

Congress has allowed NEA to drop the ball in this instance by not providing enough oversight and guidance for federal grants. American families and taxpayers should not work until almost May to earn enough to pay their taxes only to have the government fund grants that are better suited for private or state-based funds. Congress must work to reform the federal grants process to improve transparency and accountability and fulfill its own responsibility of overseeing federal agencies and the federal grants program. National grants should fund national priorities.