

Arts Group Gives State Delegation Good Grade;  
Illinois Lawmakers Get B for Funding

By Charles Storch - The Chicago Tribune

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A national arts advocacy group is to release Tuesday its first congressional report card, giving Illinois' House delegation an overall grade of B on votes to support federal arts funding.

Americans for the Arts Action Fund assigned letter grades to all members of the House.

The grades are based on 11 measures or other factors affecting the arts, with most weight given to votes on appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Washington-based group did not grade the Senate because no arts-specific votes were taken in that chamber. The more "arts-friendly" the voting, the higher the grade.

Nina Ozlu, the group's vice president, said the House averaged a B and said her group was pleased by that indication of bipartisanship.

"Our challenge will be to secure larger increases for federal funding of the arts through the NEA," she said.

In Illinois, the report card gave all the Democrats at least an A. Reps. Danny Davis and **Jan Sc hakowsky** both got an A+.

No Republican received an A+, but Reps. Mark Kirk, Judy Biggert, Timothy Johnson and Ray LaHood received A's. No Illinois lawmakers got B's or C's but D's went to Reps. Henry Hyde, Phil Crane, Jerry Weller, Don Manzullo and John Shimkus. The remaining Republican, Speaker Dennis Hastert, received an incomplete because the speaker usually does not vote on bills.

The delegations with the highest numerical scores were Vermont, Connecticut, Delaware and Hawaii. Of states with delegations of 10 or more members, Massachusetts and New York led the pack. Illinois was 15th overall.