

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

Molly Smith Artistic Director Edgar Dobie Executive Director Zelda Fichandler Founding Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Greta Hays/Lauren Alexander
press@arenastage.org, 202-600-4056

March 29, 2017

ARENA STAGE TO HONOR CONGRESSMAN G. K. BUTTERFIELD (D-NC) AT OPENING NIGHT CELEBRATION FOR *A RAISIN IN THE SUN* THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 2017

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater will present the American Voice Award to **Congressman G. K. Butterfield (D-NC)** on **Thursday, April 6, 2017** as part of the opening night celebration for Lorraine Hansberry's groundbreaking drama *A Raisin in the Sun*. Beginning at 6:00 p.m., the evening will include a cocktail reception in the Bank of America Lower Lobby, seated dinner in the Molly Smith Study, the 8:00 p.m. opening night performance of *A Raisin in the Sun* in the Fichandler Stage and post-show dessert reception in the Grand Lobby. The seated dinner will feature the presentation of the American Voice Award to Congressman G. K. Butterfield.

The **American Voice Award** honors elected officials recognized for their extraordinary support of and advocacy for American arts and arts education. Congressman Butterfield has pledged his support for the arts by hosting an annual Congressional Arts Competition recognizing high school visual arts students, cosigning a letter calling for "robust" funding for the Office of Museum Services, supporting an increase in the 2017 funding level of \$155 million for the National Endowment for the Humanities and recently supporting the National Endowment for the Arts' need for government funding. Congressman Butterfield is a regular patron of Arena Stage and will serve on the Honorary Committee for *An Evening with Bebe Neuwirth* on May 1, which will raise critical funds to support Arena Stage's artistic and community engagement programs.

Past recipients of the Award include Senators Thad Cochran (R-MS), Daniel Inouye (D-HI), Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT); Representatives Tom Davis (R-VA), Norman D. Dicks (D-WA), Bob Matsui (D-CA) and Jim Moran (D-VA); Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge (D-Ohio); former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts Dana Gioia; Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC); and Congressman Chris Van Hollen (D-MD).

Marking his 20th production at Arena Stage, Tazewell Thompson directs *A Raisin in the Sun*, which follows the Younger family yearning for a better life far from the cramped confines of their Chicago tenement. The cast features Will Cobbs as Walter Lee Younger, Dawn Ursula as Ruth Younger, Joy Jones as Beneatha Younger, Lizan Mitchell as Lena Younger and Jeremiah Hasty as Travis Younger. The production runs March 31-May 7, 2017.

For media inquiries, please e-mail press@arenastage.org.

A Raisin in the Sun is generously sponsored by Altria. Additional support is provided by JMA Solutions and Sheila Stampfli.

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For table purchase (tables begin at \$5,000 for a half-table), please contact Maria Corso at 202-600-4025 or email mcorso@arenastage.org. Table sponsorships benefit Arena Stage's artistic and educational programs.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Director Edgar Dobie, is a national center dedicated to American voices and artists. Arena Stage produces plays of all that is passionate, profound, deep and dangerous in the American spirit, and presents diverse and ground-breaking work from some of the best artists around the country. Arena Stage is committed to commissioning and developing new plays and impacts the lives of over 10,000 students annually through its work in community engagement. Now in its seventh decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. arenastage.org

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