



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Feb. 9, 2012

**CONTACT:**

Andrew Wahl, Communications Director, Humanities Washington

1204 Minor Avenue, Seattle, WA 98101

Phone: 206-682-1770 x105 | Fax: 206-682-4158

Email: [andrew@humanities.org](mailto:andrew@humanities.org) | Web: [humanities.org](http://humanities.org) | Twitter: [@HumanitiesWA](https://twitter.com/HumanitiesWA)

## KATHLEEN FLENNIKEN NAMED WASHINGTON STATE POET LAUREATE

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Kathleen Flenniken has been appointed the 2012-14 Washington State Poet Laureate. Flenniken, a lifelong Washington resident, is the state's second poet laureate. Her appointment is sponsored by Humanities Washington and the Washington State Arts Commission, with the support of Gov. Chris Gregoire.

"We are thrilled to appoint Kathleen to this very important position, and I am very excited about her potential to inspire the public statewide to deepen their appreciation and enjoyment of poetry," said WSAC Executive Director Kris Tucker.

Beginning in February 2012, Flenniken will serve a two-year term as the primary spokesperson, supporter and promoter of poetry in the state. She will receive a stipend of \$10,000 per year, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the nonprofit Humanities Washington. The stipend helps cover the cost of providing poetry programs and activities statewide.

"This is a dream job — speaking in support of the arts and humanities, and of poetry in particular, getting the chance to organize poetry events around the state, visit schools, reach kids and teachers and remote communities," said Flenniken.

Flenniken was raised in Richland, Wash., and currently lives in Seattle. She holds engineering degrees from Washington State University and the University of Washington, as well as a Masters in Fine Arts degree from Pacific Lutheran University. She is president of Floating Bridge Press, a nonprofit organization dedicated to publishing Washington poets, and teaches poetry writing to students of all ages with the support of arts organizations including WSAC, Seattle Arts & Lectures' Writers in the Schools program and Jack Straw Productions.

Flenniken's first book, *Famous* (University of Nebraska Press, 2006), won the Prairie Schooner Book Prize in Poetry, and was a finalist for a Washington State Book Award. Her second collection, *Plume* (University of Washington Press, 2012), about the Hanford nuclear site, was recently chosen for the Pacific Northwest Poetry Series.

“Kathleen’s background and talent make her the perfect person to generate conversation about poetry throughout our state,” said Julie Ziegler, executive director for Humanities Washington. “She is a wonderful poet, excellent teacher and understands the power of poetry as a shared public pursuit.”

The Washington State Poet Laureate was established by the 2007 Legislature as a cooperative program of the WSAC and Humanities Washington. Samuel Green was named Washington’s first poet laureate, serving a two-year term from 2007 to 2009. The program was suspended in 2009, at the governor’s request, due to budget constraints. In 2011, the governor agreed to resume the program, provided that no state funds would be used. WSAC and Humanities Washington resumed their partnership and the program is moving forward with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and private contributions.

## About Humanities Washington

Humanities Washington sparks conversation and critical thinking using story as a catalyst, nurturing thoughtful and engaged communities across our state. For more about Humanities Washington, visit [humanities.org](http://humanities.org).

## About the Washington State Arts Commission

Established in 1961, the Washington State Arts Commission collaborates with artists and arts organizations statewide to conserve, promote and develop artistic resources. For more about WSAC, visit [arts.wa.gov](http://arts.wa.gov).