



WASHINGTON STATE
ARTS COMMISSION

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GOVERNOR JAY INSLEE EXTENDS TERM FOR WASHINGTON STATE POET LAUREATE

CLAUDIA CASTRO LUNA WILL CONTINUE AS LAUREATE THROUGH 2021

The term of Claudia Castro Luna, the 2018-2020 Washington State Poet Laureate, has been extended to January of 2021. The extension, announced by Humanities Washington and ArtsWA, resulted from an unsuccessful search over the summer to find a new laureate for the 2020-2022 term.

“The bar as set by Claudia and the other laureates for this position is high,” said Julie Ziegler, CEO of Humanities Washington. “It requires not just extraordinary skill in writing poetry, but logistical aptitude, attention to detail, the ability to communicate passionately but clearly the power of poetry to wildly diverse audiences, and a willingness to take two years of one’s life to tirelessly travel the state.”

“Though the applicants this year were all excellent,” she said, “none had the perfect combination of skills the position required.”

Each Washington State Poet Laureate is recommended by a committee made up of diverse poets, academics, and cultural leaders from around the state. The selected poet is then appointed by the Governor. After the committee determined the search to be unsuccessful, Castro Luna was informed and asked if she would be willing to extend her term.

“It took Claudia a while to make the decision to accept,” said Karen Hanan, executive director of ArtsWA. “Devoting another full year to what can be inspiring but exhausting work was something she had to weigh carefully.”

Hanan continued, “We’re grateful to Governor Inslee for his decision to extend. From an unprecedentedly large Columbia River project, to a digital poetry map of Washington State, ferry haiku contests, and over a hundred events in every corner of the state—Claudia has been a relentless and inspiring poet laureate.

Though we are disappointed we couldn't add a new voice to the laureate position next year, we've seen firsthand the wonderful work Claudia is doing and we're pleased she has decided to continue."

With the Poet Laureate program spanning over a decade and five laureates, Humanities Washington and ArtsWA will be examining ways to make the program as inclusive as possible. The position itself is an intense one, due to a combination of the travel, the time away from work and family, the administrative responsibility, and the modest stipend.

"This is an equity issue," said Julie Ziegler. "If the position is structured to encourage mostly those with significant financial resources or flexible schedules, that means we are losing a lot of potential voices."

To ensure the program remains highly successful into the next decade, Humanities Washington and ArtsWA will use the extension to consider its strengths and challenges. They will reach out and seek input from poets, writers, and cultural leaders throughout the state to address these challenges and ensure that the future of the program is inclusive of all the great and talented poets in Washington State.

ABOUT CLAUDIA CASTRO LUNA

Claudia Castro Luna, a prominent Seattle poet and teacher, is the fifth Washington State Poet Laureate. She has been appointed by Governor Jay Inslee to serve from February 1, 2018 to January 31, 2021.

Castro Luna fled war-torn El Salvador for the United States at the age of 14 with her family. She went on to earn an MFA in poetry and an MA in urban planning. After working as a K-12 teacher, she became Seattle's first Civic Poet, a position appointed by the mayor. In that position, Castro Luna won acclaim for her [Seattle Poetic Grid](#), an online interactive map of showcasing poems about different locations around the city. The grid landed her an interview on [PBS NewsHour](#). She is also the author of the poetry chapbook *This City* and the collection *Killing Marias*, which was nominated for the Washington State Book Award. Previous poets laureate were Tod Marshall (2016-2018), Elizabeth Austen (2014-2016), Kathleen Flenniken (2012-2014), and Sam Green (2007-2009).

ABOUT THE WASHINGTON STATE POET LAUREATE PROGRAM

The Washington State Poet Laureate position was established by the Legislature in April 2007. The Legislature recognized the value of poetry to the culture and heritage of the state. Washington. The Washington State Poet Laureate is a joint program of the Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) and Humanities Washington. The Laureate is appointed by the Governor to a two-year term. The position is funded by ArtsWA, Humanities Washington, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Information and events calendar at: wapoetlaureate.org.

Additional funding for the Poet Laureate program provided by:



ABOUT HUMANITIES WASHINGTON

Humanities Washington opens minds and bridges divides by creating spaces to explore different perspectives. For more about Humanities Washington, visit humanities.org.

ABOUT ARTSWA

The Washington State Arts Commission advances and supports arts and culture in Washington State through leadership, funding, and resources that build participation and access to the arts. For more about ArtsWA visit arts.wa.gov.

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