

About the North Carolina Poet Laureate

The 1935 General Assembly created the office of state poet laureate with its passage of H.R. 909, Resolution No. 60, Session Laws. This joint resolution empowers the Governor “to name and appoint some outstanding and distinguished man of letters as poet-laureate for North Carolina.”

In January, 2004, a committee organized and chaired by Lisbeth Evans, then Secretary of the Department of Cultural Resources, met to review the original resolution and bring it up to date with a set of non-binding guidelines that Governor Easley and his successors could follow when making appointments to the office of state poet laureate. These guidelines included the following selection criteria:

- *A North Carolinian with deep connections to the cultural life of this state*
- *Literary excellence of the poet’s work*
- *Influence on other writers and appreciation of literature in its diversity throughout the state*
- *Statewide, national, or international reputation*
- *The 1935 resolution’s reference to a “distinguished man of letters” is interpreted in the context of the 21st century as a “distinguished person of letters.” Future appointments will be made without regard to gender.*

The North Carolina Poet Laureate advocates for the power of poetry and the written word to illuminate, educate, entertain and transform the minds and hearts of people of all ages and from all walks of life. The laureate acts as an ambassador for North Carolina literature and literacy, using the office as a platform from which to highlight not only his or her own work, but also the work of other writers in our state. The standard appointment is for a two-year term, but this can be extended at the discretion of the Governor.

The poet laureate shapes the position based on his or her own strengths through a long-term project or program of special interest. However, all poets laureate share the following duties: travel across North Carolina to engage writers and readers of all ages in a variety of settings including schools, libraries, and community centers; communication with the press; and writing commemorative poems for historical or culturally important occasions.

The North Carolina Arts Council supports the poet laureate by coordinating and publicizing speaking events, and typically provides a stipend to defray some of the laureate’s travel and expenses.