



Congressman John Conyers, Jr. *Honorary Chair*

Congressman John Conyers, Jr. is well known as a patron of the arts, and is renowned for his love of jazz. In his role as a federal legislator, he has successfully fought for greater recognition and funding for jazz. In 1987, the Congress passed Conyers' *House Concurrent Resolution 57* designating jazz a "national American treasure."

In 1990, the Congressman won passage of a resolution commemorating tap, a form of dance closely associated with jazz. That measure designated May 25th, the birthday of Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, as *National Tap Dance Day*. Also in 1990, Congressman Conyers won passage of appropriations legislation awarding the Smithsonian Institution with funding to establish a comprehensive jazz program, including the *Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra*.

Congressman Conyers has been supportive of efforts to present live jazz to the public in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area through his past service on the board of directors of such organizations as *Capital City Jazz Festivals, Inc.*, and *District Curators*. He has also served in the past on the boards of the *National Jazz Service Organization*, and the *Rhythm and Blues Foundation*.

In 1985, under the leadership of Congressman John Conyers, Jr., the *Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Jazz Issue Forum and Concert* was established to enhance and perpetuate the art form, emphasize its cultural heritage, and force awareness and pride within the African American community. Each year, the *Forum* explores a different aspect of the jazz experience in order to promote a better understanding of the diversity and vibrancy of this music as a dynamic cultural phenomenon within our society. Over the past years, Congressman Conyers has covered such topics as mentoring, opportunities for new talent, jazz education, the economics of jazz, and the contributions of women in jazz. The *Forum* is held in conjunction with the *Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Annual Legislative Conference*. The *Jazz Issue Forum and Concert* have brought together an impressive array of talent from song stylists to composers, from musicians to publishers, from broadcasters to educators, and historians and archivists. Among the notables who have previously participated are: Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton, Illinois Jacquet, Abby Lincoln, Nancy Wilson, Donald Byrd, Barry Harris, Billy Taylor, Shirley Horn, the Modern Jazz Quartet, the Count Basie Orchestra, Gary Bartz, Wynton and Ellis Marsalis, and many more.

In the 111th Congress, Mr. Conyers introduced *House Resolution 894*, honoring the 50th anniversary of the recording of the Miles Davis album *Kind of Blue* and reaffirming jazz as a national treasure. The album is widely considered the greatest jazz album. The House of Representatives unanimously passed *House Resolution 894* on December 15th, 2009. The vote showed the commitment the House has to preserving and celebrating American music and culture.

The 2010 *Jazz Issue Forum* entitled "Now Is the Time," presented a new legislative proposal for jazz that Congressman Conyers is developing – the *National Jazz Preservation, Education and Promulgation Act*.