

APRIL 8: THE ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF NIVA AND THE OPENING OF THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION'S APPLICATION PROCESS FOR THE \$16 BILLION SHUTTERED VENUE OPERATORS GRANT

April 7, 2021 – Established one year ago due to COVID-19's complete shuttering of America's live entertainment ecosystem, the National Independent Venue Association (NIVA) tomorrow celebrates its latest milestone – the opening of applications for the \$16 billion Shuttered Venue Operators Grant Program. Last April, the situation was dire; research showed 90% of independent venues would shutter forever if there was no emergency federal assistance. What started as a Zoom call with 75 attendees in early March 2020, evolved into the announcement of NIVA's creation on April 9, 2020. Now, its membership includes more than 3,000 venues, promoters and festivals in all 50 states, D.C. and U.S. territories, that fought tirelessly to secure the financial support necessary to #SaveOurStages.

"While no one gave us any hope that we could get legislation passed—after all, we didn't exist before the pandemic," said Dayna Frank, Owner & CEO, First Avenue Productions and Board President of NIVA. "This band of Type A independent small businesspeople came together in desperation and fought as hard for each other as they did for themselves. The opening of the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant is a culmination of all of our hard work—365 days of juggling our own individual business affairs with our tireless organizational and advocacy work with NIVA, all with no income – and is just an incredible relief. While the weight remains on our shoulders until the funds are actually distributed, seeing the light at the end of this tunnel fills me with hope for the future of our industry. As I've been saying since the beginning, 'First we survive, then we thrive.' As vaccination numbers continue to improve and emergency relief is on its way, we know one day soon we will."

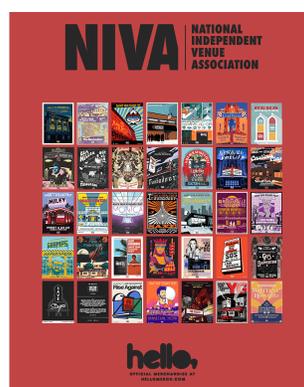
With the support of NIVA members, artists, fans and NIVA's advocates on Capitol Hill, Akin Gump, the organization successfully launched a nationwide movement to #SaveOurStages and extend Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), pulling together voices big and small to save independent venues, promoters, and their staff on the brink of collapse due to the COVID-19 shutdowns. This support, including more than two million letters to Congress and the signatures of more than 1,200 major artists led to the introduction of the Save Our Stages Act by Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT) and Rep. Roger Williams (R-TX) in July 2020. Championed by Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) with 230 bipartisan cosponsors in Congress, the bill (now known as the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant program) finally was signed into law December 27, 2020, as part of the COVID-19 Relief Bill.

"We were undoubtedly the underdogs here," said Adam Hartke, owner of The Cotillion and WAVE in Wichita and co-chair of [NIVA's Advocacy Committee](#). "To go from formation to legislation in just eight months is a true testament to the severity of the situation and the strength of our industry when we're united. We're only here today because of the support of [Akin Gump](#), Casey Higgins, Ed Pagano, Senator Cornyn, Senator Klobuchar, Leader Schumer, Representative Welch, Representative Williams, and everyone in our industry who stood by us, from the fans to the artists to the staff. To them and to all of you who voiced your support—thank you."

In the eight months between the association's launch and the successful passage of federal aid, the [NIVA Emergency Relief Fund](#) was established and able to distribute over \$3 million in critical short-term assistance to help those independent venues and promoters in the U.S. on the precipice of closing forever as they awaited this federal relief. The organization also launched [#SOS Fest](#)—a three-day virtual music festival and fundraiser with YouTube Music; expanded into the charitable non-profit realm with the creation of the 501(c)3 [National Independent Venue Foundation \(NIVF\)](#); established a new [Advisory Board](#) to further assist in preserving and nurturing the ecosystem of independent live venues and promoters throughout the United States; and began making plans for a post-COVID future with a spotlight on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the industry.

“Most people would be stunned by how far we’ve come in such a short period of time, but independent promoters and venue owners are truly the most dedicated and hard-working people imaginable,” said NIVA Executive Director Rev. Moose. “Now that we’ve laid the groundwork, it’s about so much more than just returning to shows. While we all can’t wait to see people fill our venues to enjoy the music, comedy, and entertainment that bring us all together, I’m excited to see the progress and changes NIVA is able to accomplish in the future in pursuit of a healthy, independent industry that serves and includes a diverse community of artists, fans, and industry workers at every level.”

To commemorate a year of hard work together, NIVA will offer a [one-day sale of a limited anniversary T-shirt and any remaining SOS Fest Posters \(while supplies last\)](#) only on Friday, April 9:



About NIVA

Formed at the onset of the COVID-19 shutdown, [National Independent Venue Association \(NIVA\)](#), now represents more than 3,000 members in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. NIVA created and led the #SaveOurStages campaign, resulting in landmark legislation establishing the “Shuttered Venue Operators” Grant program to be administered by the Small Business Administration. NIVA’s mission is to preserve and nurture the ecosystem of independent live venues, promoters and festivals throughout the United States. The [National Independent Venue Foundation \(NIVF\)](#) was founded to further this mission by also seeking to support a transparent, competitive marketplace serving a diverse and inclusive community of artists, fans, and industry workers. NIVA is committed to equity in its support and advocacy for independent venues, and seeks to create and encourage opportunities for venues, promoters, and festivals owned, operated, and staffed by people of color, women, non-binary, LGBTQ+, veterans, and people with disabilities.