

# 2022 Create the Vote Candidate Survey

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts on Arts and Culture in advance of the 2022 election. We'll post your responses on our website so that voters can make informed decisions about who will best represent the Arts and Culture community at the legislature.

We ask that you complete the survey by Friday, September 23rd. **We know your time is limited so we understand that your responses will be brief.**

Don't miss out on this important opportunity to be an Arts champion!

Email \*

alexandra.thomas@alexandra4rep.com

Please share your name

Alexandra Thomas

What office and district are you a candidate for?

State Rep for the 67th

Every town in Connecticut can boast cultural assets that contribute to a vibrant community and improve the quality of life for its residents.

*What are some exciting arts and cultural events and organizations that you have experienced in your community?*

The Art Walk, concerts on the Green, Rock the Block concerts, multiple festivals, HS art shows. Comm on the Arts. Movie premiers.

*If elected, will you work to strengthen the arts and culture community in the town(s) you serve? If so, how? If not, why?*

Yes. I would like to showcase more local artists with monthly events. Some for adults, some for children, and some for families.

Sandwiched between Boston and New York, Connecticut is often dismissed as a “pass through” state when it comes to tourism. Yet, our state has many world class arts institutions and a rich cultural landscape.

*Why do you think arts and culture are important in Connecticut? What is unique about our state’s arts and culture?*

Small but mighty Connecticut offers an especially vibrant cultural scene. History in every corner, theaters, restaurants, performing arts organizations and music venues of every kind. This includes five nationally acclaimed producing theaters and dozens of regional and local theaters. Tourism is vital to our economy and many CT citizens rediscovered their state during the pandemic with staycations.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many people discovered that arts and creativity play a critical role in helping us cope with emotional stress and sustain our mental health. Art helped us process loss, fight loneliness, stay connected and feel hopeful.

*Can you share a way that the arts have helped you, your family or your community get through the difficult times of Covid? How will that experience influence choices about the arts you would make as a legislator?*

Receiving drawings from my grandchildren when we could not visit in person was very important to me. Filling my home with music was, and is, important. As a legislator I will initiate and support efforts to include art education and enrichment for children, seniors, and their families.

The arts and creativity have a proven track record of economic benefit to our state. The National Endowment for the Arts' Office of Research & Analysis and the Bureau of Economic Analysis report that, in 2020, arts and cultural production in Connecticut added \$8.9 billion to our economy and accounted for 3.2 percent of our gross state product, while the arts and cultural industries employed 49,159 workers with wages and benefits totaling more than \$5.1 billion. ([https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa\\_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/](https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/))

*Despite these contributions, the arts have historically been first on the chopping block when it comes to budget priorities. What would you do to help keep arts and creativity funded in our state at a level that recognizes their economic importance?*

Host Art Days on The Hill to educate fellow legislators and CT's citizens. Solicit testimony from those who will share their story about how the arts made a difference for them. Encourage immediate refilling of the AES at SDE. Work to reestablish passenger rail service to the northwest communities by hosting cultural events to entice rail travelers.

Connecticut has not had an Arts Education Specialist at the State Department of Education (SDE) since 2016, when the last specialist left. This position is critical to assuring that our State and National Arts Education Standards are consistently implemented in all of Connecticut's school districts, especially those in under-resourced communities where students' access to the Arts is often extremely limited compared to affluent communities.

*If elected, would you support refilling the Arts Education Specialist at SDE? If not, why?*

Yes.

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