

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 *

donforct@gmail.com

Please share your name

Donald Mastronardi

What office and district are you a candidate for?

State Rep 142nd District

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?

We live in the Silvermine Community which has the Silvermine Arts Center and it is an important part of why we moved to this community. My family and I attend the NICE festival every year because it is important to experience and learn about other cultures and the arts.

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

I will always support the arts as I believe it is essential to having a well rounded education and experiencing different perspectives thru art expression.

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?

We have some of the most beautiful coastline in the country which has inspired numerous artists and attracted all different cultures to our state. The arts help our citizens express thru view of the world and inspire others to look at things from different perspectives which is important in a healthy democracy.

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?

Covid forced many of us to look for different outlets and movies and shows were a large part of that release. During the pandemic we encouraged our children to take up an instrument as well because I think music is a great way to express yourself and inspire people. Again, the arts contribute to a balanced lifestyle, increase one's ability to learn and improve critical thinking. I will always support measures that help our citizens become more well rounded people which leads to a healthier populace.

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/)

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?

CT is facing critical budget issues over the next few decades and tough budget decisions will need to be made. I will work hard to work with the private sector and non profit groups to help secure arts funding if CT has to make budget cuts that affect certain budgets. There are many like minded people in government and the private sector that can always contribute to ensuring the arts are well funded.

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?

I would not support another admin because I believe their salary is better spent on putting arts education specialists in schools that have direct contact with our students. We have enough "management" level people in government, I prefer resources go directly to teachers that have direct impact on our students.

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