

# 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 \*

ericaevans4sw@gmail.com

Please share your name

Erica Evans

What office and district are you a candidate for?

House District 14

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?*

In my community, we have some arts that are spread around the community. During my time on the town council, I worked to create an Arts Commission that will bring these groups together to be able to better serve the arts community as well as make the arts more accessible for all. We have The Wood in town that offers arts and cultural events. Our library also offers arts opportunities. Park & Rec teams with other community groups to offer activities for our younger population. There is so much more that we can do though and it is my hope that the Art Commission will be able to integrate and build upon this.

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

Absolutely. We need to encourage, support, and fund the arts. So often in grade school and even though high school students get to experience the arts, but then as adults we do not have the same experience or immersion. We should be fostering and growing the arts within each community.

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?*

As amazing as the arts experiences are in Boston and NYC, we need to make sure to offer opportunities closer to home. Some people are not able to travel to the cities to experience all that there is to offer there. We should be providing opportunities that stand alone as well as are integrated into our everyday communities for our residents. And arts within CT will be of interest to others from outside our separate towns and for some to visit CT from other states.

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?*

With young children arts activities, music, even watching Hamilton on television were ways that my family coped through covid. Knowing that in our experience that we were limited in travel to visit art in areas outside our home made me note that we need to make arts accessible in a variety of ways to meet the needs of individuals. I will be a strong advocate for supporting and growing the arts.

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?*

Beyond the economic value the arts have a life impacting value and that should be held to a high standard. If others are not able to put value to that piece of the arts, I would dig into the economic value. The draw of those visiting areas to see the arts even if it is just a painting on a store front or gingerbread houses displayed. That helps local businesses and positively impacts our communities on a local level.

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, I would support refilling this position.