

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 *

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Please share your name

Robin Comey

What office and district are you a candidate for?

State Representative 102nd 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?

I currently sit on the board of the Branford Historical Society and am responsible for publicity and development. I have done fundraising and producing for Projects for a New Millenium (Projects 2k) for large scale outdoor multimedia environmental and arts programs. For a couple of years I owned a Branford small children's art studio, holding classes that integrate literacy and the arts. I've been involved on stage and behind the scenes in theatre programs here in Branford and throughout the state. I try as best as possible to consult with, promote events and attend our local Branford Arts and Cultural Alliance. Finally, as Exec. Director of a nonprofit for early childhood in the town, I held an annual Art Walk for preschoolers to create and show their art based on a One Book One Town program. I saw so much joy in the faces of children and parents who had their artwork displayed in stores along Main Street each year.

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, fortunately Branford loves the arts. We have a strong theatre community that my family is a part of. I have helped our local Legacy Theatre connect with people that can provide advice on their most recent tax bill. I will continue to send out notices of local events through my vast network of connections. I've also been recently talking to organizers of a new SMart Festival, a juried show to take place next weekend to connect emerging artists with opportunity. I'd like to focus on what we can do provide property tax relief to arts organizations.

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?

My background is in video, film and television. Over my 30 year career I have seen the impact of deep cuts to the state office. Last week I was working with a producer visiting from another state and looking for union crew. He told me that Connecticut is the hardest state in the country to find union crew and he wouldn't come here if he didn't have to. Many of the people they hired were from New York and Boston. This is completely unacceptable and needs to be resolved. I think the film tax credit system is short-sighted and needs fixing.

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?

I'd like to share that my son who is now 15 years old was having mental health challenges during the pandemic and he was helped by finding participating in musical theatre programs. He now goes to Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School in New Haven where he has found a group of kids that he shares common interests and a love for the arts. My husband also was spending time playing music with a Dad's Band in the neighborhood. I would definitely say that those were meaningful connections that made the pandemic less isolating and scary, and a believer in the healing effect of 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/)

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?

I think we made excellent progress these past two years with increased funding to our cultural budget. We have more work to do and I'd be interested in working towards righting the Film and Video industry in this state as well as working with the unions to make it a more appealing place to do business.

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?

Absolutely. Scott was key arts education advocate. In previous years I've also put forward bills to have a dedicated Arts Supervisor in every school building in the state.