

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 *

desmaraisforct2022@gmail.com

Please share your name

Jeff Desamarais

What office and district are you a candidate for?

32nd State Senate

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?

Southbury Arts and Eats, the Bethlehem Fair

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 would look to provide needed funding for arts education because many arts and theatrical programs are very underfunded, particularly in comparison to sports programs

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 wonderful museums like the Wadsworth Atheneum, as well as our Yankee cultural history that invokes a unique experience of past present and future.

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?

Reading, particularly classics, was a pastime for me during the pandemic (and before!) as well as watching classic films like The Third Man. Art has a way of allowing people to see the great parts of life, even during difficult times. In fact they may be more important in those times than any other.

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?

As I mentioned, I think recognizing the importance of arts and culture start in schools, where funding for these programs is too low when compared to other programs, yet there are multiple examples that arts and culture are economic drivers, and engaging students interest in art may cultivate creatives in our midst that will make our state more attractive to prospective residents and businesses.

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