

# 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 \*

tim@gavinforctsenate.com

Please share your name

Tim Gavin

What office and district are you a candidate for?

State Senate, 28th 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 have had the privilege of living in and next to some of the most vibrant cities in the country—I say this after having moved from military base to base across the nation for four years. In Fairfield, where I now live, there are incredible festivals and farmers markets celebrating the small businesses and diverse talents in our region, and Annette and I never fail to find a piece of art to take home or a nearby non-profit organization to explore. Just a couple of weeks ago, we visited the Newtown Arts Festival and spoke to a volunteer about all the activities going on at the Catherine Violet Hubbard Animal Sanctuary, a non-profit center that finds homes for animals, provides humane education as well as a welcoming, safe space for Newtown residents to gather and relax. Just a day before the Arts Festival, I brought my family along to the Fairfield Museum and History Center where they had a selection of rarely-seen art on view from Ireland's Great Hunger Museum. This was a collection my father had always wanted to see and it was available to see right in my town! To have frequent and accessible exposure to our local arts, cultural histories as well as opportunities to simply gather and enjoy our neighborhood together is an essential means for bringing our communities out of so much strife in recent years. Here in Connecticut's 28th District, it is clear how much our residents deeply value this asset of community life—our events calendars are always full, and our pride for our small farms, businesses and artists is undeniable.

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*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, if elected I will be a strong supporter of the arts and culture community in my district. I firmly believe the state government has a role to play in actively fostering more creativity, beauty, and expression in our towns. As such, I would work to increase the availability of subsidized art programs, available to all ages, so that we can help nurture the artistic impulses of all our interested neighbors. Furthermore, I would take on the role of coordinating more art exhibitions and festivals that bring the residents of Newtown, Bethel, Easton, and Fairfield together so we can all celebrate the vibrant and dynamic works that come out of our community. Finally, I would also like to help organize a number of cultural festivals meant to display the ethnic diversity that exists in Connecticut and help increase multicultural awareness, understanding, and appreciation.

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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?*

Growing up in Connecticut as the son of two public school teachers, I was involved in as many things as I could be—I was an Eagle Scout, an altar boy, a drummer in a band, and a volunteer at the Roaring Brook Nature Center. Connecticut’s natural resources and rich community life that I enjoyed as a child are the reason I was so eager to return to our state after four years of military service. Connecticut’s arts and culture are also uniquely enriched by our beautiful parks, beaches and open spaces as well as our amazing universities that provide public resources for our communities to gather, learn and enjoy. While attending Yale, my partner and I often visited the Yale University Art Gallery—free and open to the public—as well as the Yale School of Music for their many concerts, similarly open to the public. Now, we love going to the free concerts on the Sherman Town Green. In Connecticut, we must maintain an active presence for the arts and humanities in our state as a means of public education and community-building. Children should continue to experience avenues for creative expression as well as the stories and histories of those around them through community engagement and freely accessible institutions.

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?*

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, my partner and I were living near a military base in South Carolina, so it was difficult to maintain ties with our friends and family or to feel a sense of community with increased isolation. We were grateful to have reliable internet access in order to reach loved ones on Zoom or to join virtual discussions and activities. Along with the impact internet accessibility had on our kids' quality of education during the pandemic, these have influenced my commitment to expand internet access in CT. What's more, during the pandemic, my partner and I had limited access to the Columbia Museum of Art, where she worked part-time. Although it became mostly unfrequented, we got the rare chance to enjoy a great collection of works and discuss our favorites in a calming environment. As a potential legislator, I am convinced that CT must maintain public access to artistic and historical institutions as the community spaces and educational resources they are. Wherever there is one, communities and children are enriched by the advantage of interacting directly with stories and art.

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?*

My chief function as an advocate for maintaining and expanding arts funding at the state level would be to provide folks in the creative community a platform to make their voices heard. Oftentimes, the most effective way to preserve certain government programs is to convey directly, through public hearings and private meetings, the importance of that program directly to legislators. Serving to connect our arts communities with the decision-makers at the state level would be a priority for me as I view it as the most effective means of underscoring the importance these programs have in creating jobs, celebrating culture, and beautifying our communities.

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?*

If elected I would support refilling the Arts Education Specialist position at SDE. This is a tremendously important decision and one that, having gone unfilled for so long, cannot be overlooked given its central role in promoting arts programs in underserved communities. I will work to see this vacancy filled and would partner with the new Arts Education Specialist to meet the funding needs of arts programs across CT.

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