



A Bold New Vision for the Arts

Americans for the Arts Action Fund is the bipartisan advocacy arm of Americans for the Arts, engaging citizens in ensuring that all Americans have the opportunity to appreciate, value, and participate in the arts. Arts Action Fund members are citizen activists who are committed to helping make certain that arts-friendly public policies are adopted at every level of government and in the private sector.

One of the objectives of the Arts Action Fund is to secure bold, new policy proposals in support of the arts and arts education in America from candidates in the 2008 presidential primary. Below are some descriptions of where and how candidates for national office could strengthen public policies in this important sector. The Arts Action Fund will be providing this set of 10 arts-related topics with bulleted policy proposals to all candidates for national office and asking that they adopt these or similar proposals as their own.

1. **Supporting Art, for Arts' Sake**—Support the National Endowment for the Arts and other federal cultural agencies that make direct grants to local arts agencies and arts organizations.
2. **Arts Education**—Support federal education policies that provide students a balanced education, allow them to excel at school, and prepare them for a globally innovative and creative workforce.
3. **The Arts & Economic Development**—Support economic development policies and tax incentives for the arts which build communities and return revenue to local, state, and federal governments.
4. **Housing & Urban Development**—Support the efforts of our country's mayors and governors to expand and strengthen cultural programs and facilities through the Community Development Block Grant program.
5. **Transportations Programs**—Support public art projects and raise the visibility of cultural sites through the Transportation Enhancement program at the U.S. Department of Transportation.
6. **Healthcare & the Arts**—Support efforts to include the arts in healthcare delivery programs and encourage initiatives that provide healthcare coverage to arts organizations and individual artists.
7. **Rural Initiatives**—Support rural economic development, promote local artists and heritage initiatives by strengthening existing grants through the Forest Service and U.S. Department of Agriculture.
8. **Public Diplomacy**—Support the Cultural Exchange programs at the U.S. State Department as a component of a robust public diplomacy effort to share arts and culture among nations.
9. **National & Community Service**—Support the expansion of service learning and volunteerism in partnerships with arts and cultural organizations as a primary need under the *National Community Service Trust Act*.
10. **National Arts Leadership Opportunities**—Support the inclusion of artists, innovators, and creative sector leaders at all levels of government and public policy planning.

Supporting Art, for Arts' Sake

We must always remember the fundamental value of the arts. They foster beauty, creativity, originality, and vitality. The arts reflect the diversity of our experiences as individuals and our communities as a whole. They remind us of our past and help us imagine the future. The arts inspire us, sooth us, provoke us, involve us, and connect us. The arts and artists of America are our national treasure that this great nation needs, deserves, and must support. You can help by supporting these proposals:

- Increase support for the National Endowment for the Arts, not just to its 1992 funding level of \$176 million, (which would be \$334 million in today's dollars with a 3 percent annual increase) but set it on a path towards a \$500 million annual appropriations.
 - Expand the Local Arts Agency Grant Program to a priority regranting program, allowing for efficient and effective grant distribution of arts dollars to every corner of the country in partnership with local arts agencies.
 - Support State Arts Agencies that provide leadership, particularly in rural and small states, to artists and creative endeavors.
 - Provide a dedicated revenue stream to build a true endowment for stable funding of the arts in America.
- Increase support for the National Endowment for the Humanities, Office of Museum Services (at the Institute of Museum & Library Services), and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Arts Education

Arts education develops the precise set of skills that are most competitive in the emerging global economy that is driven by knowledge and ideas. Students who engage in high-quality arts learning will have an advantage in competing for high-paying jobs in growth industries. The best paying jobs are increasingly centered on creativity, higher-order thinking, and communication skills.

Despite the arts being one of 10 core academic subjects, the *No Child Left Behind Act* only requires schools to report student achievement test results for reading, mathematics, and science. Further, the law requires all students to meet state-determined standards in these three subjects by the year 2014. Due to these requirements, and the amount of change schools must see in student achievement, there are many reports of decreasing instruction time for other subjects, especially in the arts.

The Center on Education Policy report entitled *From the Capital to the Classroom: Year Four of the No Child Left Behind Act* finds that 71 percent of school leaders report reduced instructional time in at least one other subject to make more time for reading and mathematics. The study also finds that 22 percent of school districts surveyed have reduced instructional time for art and music. This unintended consequence must be addressed or arts education will continue to be squeezed out of the classroom.

The retention of our best teachers is yet another daunting challenge. It can be met, however, by ensuring schools embrace the arts. Schools, especially those struggling, can retain their best teachers by becoming havens for creativity and innovation—places where students want to learn and teachers want to teach. As we aim to improve the teaching environment, the arts can help us retain our best future and current educators in our nation's schools.

As this country works to strengthen our foothold in the global economy, the arts equip students with a creative, competitive edge. With nearly three million people working for arts businesses, arts education is a critical tool in fueling the creative industries with arts-trained workers, as well

as new arts consumers. The arts provide the skills and knowledge students need to develop the creativity and determination necessary for success in today's global information age. Alan Greenspan, the former U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman, noted, "The arts develop skills and habits of mind that are important for workers in the new economy of ideas." You can help by introducing these actions:

- Declare the arts central to a balanced education. The next president needs to declare literacy in the arts central to an educated citizenry as much reading, math, and science are considered now.
- Reverse the trend of fewer arts education classes and formalize an incentive program to hire arts educators and strengthen the Arts in Education program at the U.S. Department of Education through the reauthorization of the *No Child Left Behind Act (Elementary & Secondary Education Act)*.
- Fortify arts education as a priority afterschool activity within the 21st Century Community Learning Center program.
- Execute a "Benchmarking Arts Education in America's Schools" study, similar to Los Angeles County's "Arts in Focus" survey, of the nation's 14,000 school districts to establish quality and condition of arts education in America at the local level.

The Arts & Economic Development

Across the country, the role of the arts as an economic engine is growing in acceptance and strength. The for-profit and nonprofit arts and cultural organizations pay their employees, purchase supplies, contract for services, and acquire assets from within their communities. Their audiences and customers generate spending for local merchants such as restaurants, retail stores, hotels, entertainment, advertising, and technology. Support for these creative industries is an investment in economic well-being as well as quality of life.

The recent *Arts & Economics Prosperity III* study finds that nationally, the nonprofit arts and culture industry generates \$166.2 billion in economic activity every year—\$63.1 billion in spending by organizations and an additional \$103.1 billion in event-related spending by their audiences. The impact of this activity is significant, supporting 5.7 million U.S. jobs and generating \$29.6 billion in government revenue.

Funding and policies at the federal level could be directed to recognize the growth potential and direct benefits of encouraging cities and states to strategically invest in the arts in order to drive economic development. These proposals would help develop dynamic creative economies in large and small, urban and rural communities across the country. You can help by supporting these proposals:

- *Reform Federal Economic Development Programs to Support the Creative Economy*
 - Create a "Creative Communities Block Grant" at the U.S. Department of Commerce based on the popular Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program at the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. The funding would assist localities design cultural plans, develop cultural districts (intensifying the concentration of cultural opportunities), and strengthen marketing of cultural tourism efforts at local, regional, and international levels.
 - Expand granting abilities through the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the U.S. Department of Commerce. Both agencies should be directed to expand their grant opportunities to allow for applications from the creative economy sector. The SBA should expand their grant program to include local arts agencies in order to reach local artists and entrepreneurs in all corners of the country.
 - Provide Innovation Planning Grants through the Economic Development Administration to allow states to research and develop their creative plans, which

- would provide analysis for and measure the opportunities needed to improve a state's creative economy sector.
 - Update national worker training programs to include 21st century skills. The U.S. Department of Labor should increase workforce training in technology, design, and communications to include workers in all areas of the creative economy: small business, entrepreneurs, younger workers, and workers seeking jobs in the nonprofit sector.
 - Strengthen historic preservation and design programs such as Preserve America, the National Historic Registry Program, and the Mayors' Institute for City Design. In many cases, the prime catalyst to increasing tourism and securing a community is the preservation of historic buildings and thoughtful creation of new construction. Giving localities an enhanced ability to protect their culture and heritage will allow localities to preserve the uniqueness and culture of every community.
 - Include artists and creative industry occupations in official employment measurements conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census Bureau, and the Commerce Department and Office of Travel and Tourism. Develop focus on the creative sector by grouping creative job classifications, utilizing DUNS number system, and reporting on organizations with less than 50 employees and multiple job-holders.
- *Promote Private Investments in the Creative Economies Through Tax Policy and Incentives*
 - Encourage downtown investment tax credits already in use by many states and localities.
 - Provide tax credits for businesses participating in public-private economic development partnerships that promote the creative economy.
 - Propose legislation that would provide incentives for artists to donate works of art to institutions to assist communities in developing collections, such as the Artist-Museum Partnership Act.
 - Propose enhanced deductibility for artists' business expenses.
 - Expand charitable tax deduction for non-itemizers and make permanent the IRA Rollover provision to encourage charitable giving.
 - Encourage inclusion of United Arts Funds (UAF) in federal, state, and local public agency workplace giving campaigns. UAF works to build healthier communities by raising private support for the arts through annual workplace giving programs and by direct marketing on behalf of arts, culture, and/or science organizations.
- Appoint a senior-level administration official or cabinet officer for arts and cultural policy coordination, guiding initiatives from federal agencies responsible for tourism, education, economic development, intellectual property policy, broadband access, and other arts-related areas.

Housing & Urban Development

The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development has been an important partner for helping communities develop a cultural infrastructure. Primarily through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, governors and mayors throughout the country can use federal grants for programmatic support and construction of cultural facilities.

- Strengthen the CDBG program to provide for more cultural facility construction, and expand to encourage greater support for public and private partnerships in Percent-For-Art programs.

- Leverage private sector support for areas such as artist housing, live/work studios, cultural facilities for performance/presentation, employment/job training, etc.

Transportation Programs

The Transportation Enhancement (TE) program at the U.S. Department of Transportation is one of the most popular federal programs for supporting public art projects. Much of the \$6 billion spent since 1991 on federal transportation enhancement projects has included significant arts components ranging from public art to construction of new performing arts facilities, repurposing office space, and even provision of live/work space—all designed and managed locally.

- Encourage partnerships between the TE program and local arts agencies when considering design projects.
- Enable localities to make increased designations of cultural districts, trails, and corridors so to improve signage to cultural sites.

Healthcare & the Arts

There is tremendous need to increase insurance coverage for artists, many of whom derive their income from independent contracts and/or part-time employment that fail to provide them healthcare coverage. Federal support from the National Endowment for the Arts has provided some assistance to coordinating healthcare coverage for artists, but much more remains to be done.

The arts have also been found to make important contributions to the field of medicine by enhancing healing and patient well-being. Support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Institute on Aging has provided some federal assistance in this area. Several healthcare organizations have begun new initiatives to explore additional connections between the arts and healthcare—these could be fostered with additional support.

As candidates for national office develop their healthcare proposals, it is important to realize that artists around the country, like other self-employed individuals, need to be provided options for health insurance coverage.

- Encourage national proposals which also encourage states to continue to enhance healthcare coverage which has provided improved options for artists and employees of arts organizations.
- Develop a comprehensive research program through the U.S. Health & Human Services Department to further study quality of care issues relating to the arts.
- Form an advisory commission among representatives of the federal health organizations to provide clear strategies to incorporate the arts into healthcare delivery.
- Encourage replication of the arts in healthcare programs in rural and underserved communities as many quality arts in healthcare programs exist but are unavailable to all communities.
- Engage patients through the arts to improve the healthcare experience as the arts are an effective method in treating post-traumatic stress disorder. Arts in healthcare programs for veteran's hospitals should be made a priority to better support our returning soldiers.

Rural Initiatives

Our rural communities contain some of the greatest cultural assets of our country. Rural economic development should be strengthened to help these communities promote the richness of their heritage and assist local artists with their entrepreneurship.

- Strengthen existing grants to rural areas through the Forest Service and U.S. Department of Agriculture, such as the Community Facility Grant Program.

- Direct the Small Business Administration to expand their grant and loan programs to include local arts agencies which can serve as intermediaries to rural artisans and entrepreneurs.
- Improve the local broadcast capabilities of rural communities by increasing the number of recipients of the Public Television Digital Transition Grant Program at U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Public Diplomacy

While international exchange has been called the “single most successful public diplomacy initiative of the past 50 years,” the State Department has underfunded its cultural exchange programs. Cultural exchange programs, like those currently active at the U.S. State Department, promote ties between private citizens and organizations in the United States and abroad by presenting U.S. history, society, arts, and culture in all of its diversity to overseas audiences. Increasing support for these programs would provide greater international exposure for U.S. arts groups and support national public diplomacy objectives. We seek to return the cultural programs to the prominence they once held at the former U.S. Information Agency (USIA).

- Increase exponentially the current Cultural Exchange programs at the State Department which currently receives a minimal \$7.5 million annually. This funding should be increased to strengthen the annual competitive grant program and to successfully further diplomacy goals.
- Give greater funding and flexibility to the cultural affairs officers posted at American embassies around the world to further provide foreign audiences with thoughtful cultural programming. Encourage partnerships between Americans abroad and domestic local arts agencies to assist in presenting America’s best talent.

National & Community Service

Volunteers with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNS) have developed and managed afterschool arts programs; mentored children in low-income neighborhoods; organized and sustained summer art camps; and engaged community members to create murals, write poetry, and participate in drum circles. These successful service projects should be expanded to include greater inclusion of local arts agencies—typically a leader among local civic organizations.

- Expand the purposes of the *National & Community Service Trust Act* to include “cultural” as a primary need.
- Include in the assistance guidelines, specific references to community art projects, and cultural organizations in the list of eligible national service programs as detailed in the *National & Community Service Trust Act*.
- Design a recognition program to profile successful community projects that have served to enhance and unite distressed neighborhoods through the arts among CNS Special Initiatives.

National Arts Leadership Opportunities

National leaders in the arts and culture can provide guidance in policy areas such as economic development, workforce development, education, commerce and international trade issues.

- Include artists, innovators, and leaders from the creative sector in the numerous advisory boards, policy roundtables, and commissions in all areas of government.
- Publicly acknowledge the exemplary support for the arts by private-sector entities through national awards and honorary commendations.



*The Americans for the Arts Action Fund's **ArtsVote2008** initiative is inviting each presidential candidate to detail their positions on the arts and arts education. The following is a checklist of opportunities to work with the arts community to develop and publicize your arts positions.*

- **Use the Americans for the Arts Action Fund as a resource for research and case studies to develop the candidate's position statement on the arts.**
- **Provide an opportunity to interview the candidate by the leadership of the Americans for the Arts Action Fund.**
- **Schedule a speech on the arts and the cultural sector which the Arts Action Fund can videotape, podcast, and distribute to members in the early primary states.**
- **Include a policy on the arts in the issues section of your campaign website.**
- **Provide information on your candidate's background in the arts.**
- **Respond to the Arts Action Fund survey on the arts.**