

ELECTIONS 2008: CAMPAIGNING FOR PUBLIC ARTS SUPPORT

During election campaigns, candidates running for office are working to get acquainted with the voters. Arts advocates need to be visible during the campaigns so the candidates will see that voters are serious about public support for the arts. Take advantage of the campaign season to let the candidates know who you are, why the arts are important to you, and how the arts contribute to the life of your community.

Attend the candidate forums and town meetings, and the meet-and-greet parties in your neighborhoods as advocates for public funding of the arts to:

- confront the candidates on issues of public support for the arts
- educate the candidates on the role the arts play in their communities and the life of the nation
- ask the candidates to show where they stand on questions of public arts policy

Then, after Election Day, our newly elected legislators and other public officials will be ready to work with us on a public agenda in support of the arts.

NASAA offers these questions and talking points to help arts advocates inject the issue of public support for the arts into the electoral process, and to help define a candidate's position on the arts in public policy. You should also include questions for candidates on local issues that are timely and specific to your community.

public funding for the arts

Will you support public funding for the arts after you are elected?

- Public spending on the arts helps to make the arts available to millions of Americans for projects in theater, dance, music, visual arts, folk arts, arts education and other arts disciplines.
- Public funding for the arts leverages private funding.
- Public and private spending support the arts infrastructure which is critical to the economic vitality of state and local communities and to our nation's cultural well-being.
- Arts programs can help achieve the policy objectives of state government, such as those focusing on arts education, youth at risk, community building and economic development.



support for the national endowment for the arts and the state arts agency

Will you vote to increase funding for the National Endowment for the Arts/our state arts agency?

- Government funding for the arts offers people from all economic backgrounds and all regions of the country access to a broad range of cultural activities.
- Funds from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) granted to state arts agencies ensure that every state receives federal funds.
- The 2008 NEA budget at \$144 million is down from funding of \$176 million in 1992.
- The NEA receives strong bipartisan support in Congress grounded on legislators' satisfaction with the arts endowment's efforts to ensure accountability and to broaden its distribution of granting funds.

support for arts education

Will you support funding and legislation that makes the arts part of the core curriculum?

- Quality arts education policy recognizes the arts as a core learning subject, provides professional development opportunities for arts teachers, and supports after-school arts learning opportunities and arts education partnerships between schools and community arts and cultural organizations.
- Active participation and learning in the arts improve overall academic achievement, socialization, and preparation for college and the workforce.
- The arts make a tremendous impact on the developmental growth of every child and have proven to level the "learning field" across socio-economic boundaries.
- The arts have a measurable impact on youth at risk in deterring delinquent behavior and increasing overall academic performance.
- The arts help children develop literacy skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing.

A Note on Nonprofit Organizations and Political Campaigns

The Internal Revenue Code prevents tax-exempt 501(C)(3) organizations from “participating or intervening” in a political campaign on behalf of a candidate for public office. Despite this prohibition, the federal tax law permits nonprofit groups to engage in a range of activities, including the following:

- 1. Taking Positions:** The law permits 501(C)(3) organizations to inform candidates of the organization’s positions and to ask candidates to go on record in support of these positions.
- 2. Questionnaires to Candidates:** Organizations with a broad range of interests can safely distribute questionnaires to candidates and disseminate the responses, provided there is no indication of bias or preference in respect to the views of any candidate for an office.
- 3. Voting Records:** Organizations may inform their members how each legislator voted on issues of concern to the organization. This information may be disseminated during a campaign so long as it is in the same unbiased manner as at other times, with no editorial opinion and no approval or disapproval of individual voting records. However, a guide to voting records on a narrow range of issues is looked upon unfavorably by the IRS when distributed by an organization concerned with those same issues.
- 4. Invitations to Candidates:** An organization may invite candidates to attend its meetings and to speak on issues of interest to the organization. Copies of a candidate’s speeches or other remarks may be distributed if the organization regularly publishes a newsletter and circulation is generally limited to its own members.
- 5. Nonprofit Research:** Where research and studies prepared by a tax-exempt organization are made available to the general public, as well as to political candidates, the organization will not be determined as promoting the candidacy of an individual for public office.

Obviously, the law in no way prohibits individuals associated with a nonprofit organization from participating as private citizens in campaign activity.

Remember to vote on November 4. Your elected officials influence the funding and other measures that affect the issues in the arts important to you and your community