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# Another View -- Peggo Hortsmann Hodes: Arts funding is an investment in NH's culture and economy

By PEGGO HORTSMANN HODES

Arts. Culture. Learning. They are not a luxury. They are the things that define us. Here in New Hampshire we are fortunate. For a small state we have a wealth of artists, writers and sculptors. Our culture, past and present, is rich, but our future is in question.

Nonprofit arts and culture organizations contribute more than \$53 million annually to the state's economy, and audiences contribute another \$62 million. That equates to more than 10,000 jobs in the Granite State.

The ACPSA, a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis, found that in 2012 arts and culture contributed more than \$698 billion to the U.S. economy, or 4.32 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product, more than construction or transportation and warehousing. In fact, that report found that nearly 5 million workers were employed in arts and culture, receiving \$334.9 billion in wages. Not surprisingly, for every 100 jobs created from new demand for the arts, 62 additional jobs are also created outside of the industry. But to get there, it takes crucial public seed money.

Think of the annual show of the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen — bringing thousands of people into the state who shop, dine, stay at inns and hotels, and perhaps stop for gas and a trip to the state liquor store. Grant funds from the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts help support this event and the league's many other activities. The money our state invests in organizations like this brings a huge return for economy.

As a result, we have seen artist cooperatives and sharing programs sprout across the Granite State as well, adding to the well-established League of New Hampshire Craftsmen, Furniture Masters, and others. Tourists come to buy art at our crafts fairs (sales at the annual league fair top \$2 million); they seek out ties to Parrish, Salinger and Frost. Our only National Park features the work of the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. So why is funding for the arts always debated in our state?

Studies continue to show that teaching the arts helps children understand academics better, be more tolerant, and embrace creativity. They go on to be the entrepreneurs, business leaders, and community leaders that fuel our economy. But time after time we make shortsighted choices and don't properly fund the arts in our state. We leave millions of federal dollars on the table and our tax dollars end up helping some other state's economy instead of ours.

Tourism is New Hampshire's second biggest industry and it contributes millions to our state budget. We know that people travel to see unique things like landscapes and quaint towns, and the arts are a vital part of that. We have a rich tradition in summer theater, artist colonies, and an elite school of painting inspired by our landscapes. But those things can't be just in the past — they are just as important today as we define who we are and what makes us special.

Almost 40 years after it opened in theaters, "On Golden Pond" still draws folks here, painters still flock to the White Mountains for inspiration, and shoppers still prize our fairs, galleries, and diversity of art. For a small state we have an array of museums, indie movie theaters, and performing arts centers all of which offer culture, new ideas, and perspective. Think about how you define our state, the truly unique things — how many of them have a link to the arts? We think of pewter tankers, amazing turned wood, and granite jewelry. We make these things with our minds, our hands and our souls — that is the true value of this place. Investing in the arts is an investment in tomorrow.

Peggo Hortsmann Hodes is co-president of New Hampshire Citizens for the Arts.