

Op-Ed: October is National Arts and Humanities Month Friday, October 23, 2015

Since 1985 October has been National Arts and Humanities Month – a time to encourage all Americans to participate in the arts. Here in the Granite State, we are doing our part. We serve as the bi-partisan co-chairs of the commission to study the economic impact of the arts and culture in New Hampshire and to recommend ways in which the state can enhance and expand this sector of our economy as outlined in House Bill 279.

We invite you to assist us. Our deadline is November of 2016 and between now and then we want to fully understand the current impact of creative industries throughout our state. We are calling on you to submit examples of arts and culture that positively impact your local economy.

Looking at the data we have, we know that the arts have a bigger economic footprint than most might perceive. According to Americans for the Arts, the nonprofit arts industry (including museums, theater and dance companies, performing arts centers, orchestras, arts councils and more) generates more than \$22 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenues each year - well beyond their collective \$4 billion in arts funding.

In New Hampshire, nonprofit arts and culture organizations generated more than \$115 million in economic activity in 2010 alone, that's more than twice the national average!

Across the country and in New Hampshire, arts and culture as an economic engine is thriving. In our hometowns, we see wonderful examples of this. Nashua is the only city in America that holds an international sculpture symposium each year. Artists are invited from around the world to spend three weeks in Nashua creating public art. While in Bedford, Bedford Off Broadway is a community theater that performs in the town's historic Old Town Hall – bringing their shows to the community.

The ACPSA, a partnership between the 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 % 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 that 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.

We believe that investing in arts and culture is investing in our communities, and with this study commission underway, now is the time to assess and quantify the current impact in order to put forth suggestions that make fiscal sense for our state. Please email us at (Email Address Here) and share your testimony as to how you see arts and culture impacting your local economy. And while we have the attention of the entire country (thanks to the first in the nation primary) please remind candidates that here in New Hampshire we have a long tradition of supporting creative industries. We have a unique opportunity to start a discussion about the role of arts and culture here in our state with the next President of the United States.

Rep. David Danielson, Bedford & Rep. Ken Gidge, Nashua