



Arts South Dakota

CANDIDATES SURVEY ON THE ARTS AND GOVERNMENT

As a service to our statewide membership, Arts South Dakota conducted a survey of South Dakota's candidates, asking for their perspectives on the arts and government.

As the state's only arts advocacy group, Arts South Dakota is the public partner to the state arts agency. We do not endorse candidates for public office and all responses are published verbatim. Candidates are listed alphabetically.

Candidates for United States House of Representatives

QUESTION 1: What is your personal background and experience in the arts? (check all that apply)

Tim Bjorkman, Democrat: Instrumental, Vocal, Photography, Literary Arts

George Hendrickson, Libertarian: Theater

Dusty Johnson, Republican: Instrumental, Vocal, Theater, Literary Arts

Ronald L. Wieczorek, Independent: Visual, Theater, Literary Arts

QUESTION 2: What arts activities have you attended, participated in, or supported in the last year? (check all that apply)

Tim Bjorkman, Democrat: Music, Visual Arts, Photography, Film/Media, Literary Arts

George Hendrickson, Libertarian: Music, Visual Arts

Dusty Johnson, Republican: Music, Theater, Theater, Film/Media

Ronald L. Wieczorek, Independent: Music, Theater, Visual Arts, Theater, Photography, Literary Arts, Culinary Arts

QUESTION 3: Are you aware of an agency of state government – the South Dakota Arts Council (SDAC) – whose purpose is to recognize the importance of creativity in the lives of all South Dakotans, the Council makes quality arts accessible throughout the state by providing encouragement, grants, services and information to artists, arts organizations, schools and the public?

Tim Bjorkman, Democrat: Very Aware

George Hendrickson, Libertarian: Very Aware

Dusty Johnson, Republican: Very Aware

Ronald L. Wiczorek, Independent: Moderately Aware

Questions 4: Do you support a funding increase for the National Endowment for the Arts, so that arts organizations in South Dakota can present more high quality arts programs for all of its citizens?

Tim Bjorkman, Democrat: Agree

George Hendrickson, Libertarian: Agree

Dusty Johnson, Republican: Disagree

Ronald L. Wiczorek, Independent: Strongly Agree

Additional Comments:

Tim Bjorkman, Democrat: I have a lifelong love of music and writing. I sing and play guitar and enjoy sharing music with my family and friends. I am a published author, having researched and written the story of Verne Sankey, a South Dakota man who became a notorious outlaw in the 1930s. "Verne Sankey: America's First Public Enemy," was published in 2007 by University of Oklahoma Press.

I have a deep-seated appreciation for the creative arts and those with creative gifts. I strongly support a thriving arts community in our towns, state and nation. I believe it is a crucial part of a full and rich life.

George Hendrickson, Libertarian: I am encouraged that the seed money from the National Endowment generates so much private funding to promote arts and art programs. I really feel



that this is how taxpayer based grant programs are to work, and it is evident that here in South Dakota, The South Dakota Arts Council has done a fantastic job of utilizing these grant programs to raise needed funds and kept the burden to the taxpayer low. I would consider a funding raise provided that the justification for additional tax dollars is clearly justified and can articulate how it would be utilized and what the forecasted result expected would be.

Dusty Johnson, Republican: I would not look to increase NEA funding at this time. However, once the federal government stops deficit spending and begins to operate under a balanced budget I would be open to a conversation about increasing their funding. Perhaps in the interim, we could look to our state and local governments and to the generosity of private citizens to help with funding for arts programs in South Dakota.

This isn't just rhetoric for me. My wife support the arts in our community and state. For example, each year my wife and I pay for more than a dozen high school jazz band students to attend the "Holiday Jam with the Hegg Brothers." We think it is important for students for experience professional-quality musicians in their communities.

Ronald L. Wiczorek, Independent: Although I support increased funding for the tax-supported NEA, I would temper its disbursements to programs of a classical nature. True, classical art serves as food for the mind, uplifting the soul; it is not entertainment, and it does not promote degeneracy. Funding for classical composition, in the performance as well as plastic arts, garnered from a combination of governmental, organizational, and private contributions should be sufficient to sustain the construction and maintenance of performance, practice, and gallery venues, as well as studios for players and artists alike, in every moderately-sized town in America in general and South Dakota in particular, similar to what the Hill-Burton Act did with medical facilities.

QUESTION 5: We believe arts education stimulates creativity, communications and learning, and that arts education is an essential tool for reaching youth at risk. HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE ARTS TO THE EDUCATION OF ALL SOUTH DAKOTA CHILDREN?

Tim Bjorkman, Democrat: I believe it that every South Dakota child should have the opportunity to be exposed to and have the opportunity to learn to appreciate the worlds' masterpieces and the great art of this state. Kay and I passed that along to our four children, and we have enjoyed innumerable opportunities to tour art galleries, attend live theater and enjoy musical performances.

George Hendrickson, Libertarian: I think arts education is vitally important to all children in SD. The benefits in creativity and expanding childrens scope of school involvement is essential.



Dusty Johnson, Republican: An appreciation of the arts makes us better citizens, better people, and better leaders. The arts help us understand complex concepts, allow us to empathize with different cultures and peoples, and help us better comprehend the human condition.

Ronald L. Wieczorek, Independent: Classical art and classical literature is important to ALL children and ALL adults. The teaching of logic, substituting for reasoned thinking is the downfall of education. "Artificial Intelligence" is a fraud. Machines don't think; they never will. We are not machines, nor are we animals (or plants, either) We are human, and, unlike any other species that we know of, are uniquely endowed with willful creativity. Our brain is not our mind. Classical art helps to stir and develop our intangible powers of imagination by planting the idea of metaphor in our minds, to invent and discover that which was previously unknown, in a never-completed moral quest for a less and less imperfect understanding of the natural laws of our Universe. Percy Bysshe Shelley once wrote that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." The evidence of disaster wrought by today's education with its deductive logic, probability and chaos theories, statistical analysis, and pervasive reductionism is obvious to any thinking person. Einstein's friend Kurt Gödel demonstrated that there cannot exist a formal system of logic that is both complete and consistent. Rather, human thinking at its most creative operates according to a method described by Plato as "hypothesizing the higher hypothesis."

QUESTION 6: We believe the arts are an intrinsic part of the well-being of our communities, and that the arts play an important role in economic development and tourism. WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE POTENTIAL FOR CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH DAKOTA, AND HOW WOULD YOU ENCOURAGE THAT DEVELOPMENT AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL?

Tim Bjorkman, Democrat: From our Native American art to the sculptures of Gutzon Borglum and Korczak Ziolkowski, the paintings of Mary Groth, Jon Crane, John Green, Terry Redlin, to mention a very few, South Dakota has a marvelously rich cultural heritage that has unlimited potential for growth. I will be a strong advocate for continued funding for the Arts if I am elected to Congress.

George Hendrickson, Libertarian: I am not sure that the Federal Government has the standing to directly affect State level tourism. That being said, I think that the National Endowment for the Arts is an effective tool to help drive promotion, awareness and fundraising in areas where State and Local Bodies have dropped the ball or do not understand the larger picture of the benefits of arts in our communities.



Dusty Johnson, Republican: We should absolutely continue to develop our rich cultural history and share it with the world – we’re one of a kind. I would make encouraging our students to participate in the Congressional Art Contest one of the focal points of my constituent services so that South Dakota’s creativity can be put on display in the U.S. Capitol. We should also work within our communities to encourage young people to access the arts by removing barriers to their participation.

Ronald L. Wiczorek, Independent: South Dakota was settled largely by Prussian Germans. So, let’s bring back Germany’s “poet of freedom,” Friedrich Schiller! His “Theater as a Moral Institution” should be required reading in every drama department classroom in the land. His sublimely composed plays (not some oddball “modern” adaptation) should be acted and attended regularly in every town, by professional artists and by amateur “community” players. Ditto for the plays of William Shakespeare. The beautiful language of the King James Bible would not have been possible without Shakespeare. Working through the music of Haydn, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Brahms, Verdi, and other producers of non-Romantic composition should occupy the attention of every school child; the hearing and playing of this music should be the excited anticipation of every adult. And, let the singing and the music be performed at the scientific (Verdi) pitch of C=256 hz.

I’ve often heard the complaint that children coming out of our public schools cannot read beyond an elementary school level. But their writing abilities are even worse! Cut off from the great minds of the past (because they can’t and therefore don’t read), and cut off from communicating profound thoughts to the present and future (because they can’t write), the generations are becoming increasingly lost and irrelevant, stuck in so-called “social media” scribbles. The mind-destroying tests composed of idiotic multiple-choice “questions,” with similarly idiotic “answers” already provided do not reveal what should be a child’s growing wisdom nor prepare the child to exercise sober judgement regarding their lives and the life of their country and world. They must be able to discern treasure from trash.

QUESTION 7: We seek the support and endorsement of individuals, businesses and government. WHAT IS YOUR POSITION ON THE ROLE OF PUBLIC FUNDING FOR THE ARTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL?

Tim Bjorkman, Democrat: I fully support the continued funding of arts on a national level. They are a vital part of a well-rounded education and a rich life.

George Hendrickson, Libertarian: As a fiscal conservative Libertarian, I almost always want to see the private sector funding and fueling programs in our communities rather than adding another burden to the taxpayers. Arts programs are one of the few exceptions to this stand because I recognize that many times people don't see or understand the impact programs like this have on a community. Many don't realize that almost everywhere they go or in most things that they do, they are directly interacting with art, or the creative process that has been birth from it. It is like the artwalk in downtown Sioux Falls, many times we take for granted the genius that went into the works of art that have been put there to beautify the area and stimulate our imaginations and hopefully promote the artist and their craft.

Dusty Johnson, Republican: I think that public funding should provide basic funding for public arts projects, but that ultimately states, communities, and citizens are better suited to funding art projects at the local level.

Ronald L. Wiczorek, Independent: One proper area of investment for a newly-established National Bank would be funding fundamental science and the arts. The Kennedy White House set a good example of support and encouragement for the arts and science. Here are some selections from a speech by President Kennedy delivered at Amherst College on October 26, 1963:

“The artist, however faithful to his personal vision of reality, becomes the last champion of the individual mind and sensibility against an intrusive society and an officious state. The great artist is thus a solitary figure. He has, as Frost said, a lover's quarrel with the world. In pursuing his perceptions of reality, he must often sail against the currents of his time. This is not a popular role. We see how the artist's fidelity has strengthened the fibre of our national life. If sometimes our great artists have been the most critical of our society, it is because their sensitivity and their concern for justice, which must motivate any true artist, makes him aware that our Nation falls short of its highest potential. I see little of more importance to the future of our country and our civilization than full recognition of the place of the artist. If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him. We must never forget that art is not a form of propaganda; it is a form of truth.”

As a percentage of our nation's GDP, we spend about 4% on our military, which contributes nothing to enhancing our standard of living or our pursuit of happiness. Imagine, just imagine, how different our lives would be if we spent that much on the arts!

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We welcome any additional comments or experiences you would like to make with regards to the arts in South Dakota. Please use the space below. With a reach of over 5,000 individuals, organizations and businesses, Arts South Dakota will share your responses with our statewide constituents in the Fall issue of Arts Alive, in our weekly e-newsletter, in our monthly column distributed to every weekly and daily newspaper in South Dakota, on our social media channels, and on our website, <https://artssouthdakota.org>.

Tim Bjorkman, Democrat:

George Hendrickson, Libertarian:

Dusty Johnson, Republican:

Ronald L. Wiczorek, Independent: The 14th-16th century Renaissance in Europe had a profound effect on the development of all civilization forever. Today, mere extra "support for the arts" is insufficient to save us. Today, we need another broad-ranging cultural and scientific Renaissance across all endeavors. Individual artists, writers, composers, scientists, inventors must be encouraged and supported. There is no separation between science and art; science is art, art is science. They are the same. No one can dream a future without imagination. Everyone has the potential for genius, only some must work harder at it.

ArtsSouthDakota.org

Arts South Dakota, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, enriches the lives of South Dakotans and their visitors, by advancing the arts through service, education and advocacy.

Candidate responses are listed in alphabetical order.

