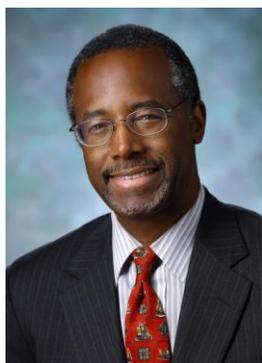




**To:** Arts Action Fund Members  
**From:** Americans for the Arts Action Fund  
**Date:** 8 September 2015  
**Re:** Ben Carson and the Arts\*

\*Note: Ben Carson suspended his Presidential campaign on 3/2/2016.

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**Name:** Ben Carson  
**Party:** Republican  
**Born:** 18 September, 1951 in Detroit, Michigan  
**Previous Public Offices Held:** None  
**Other Jobs Held:** Director of Pediatric Neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins-1985-2013  
**Educational Background:** Johns Hopkins Hospital, Residency in Neurosurgery; M.D., University of Michigan; B.A. in Psychology, Yale



#### 2016 Presidential Campaign Information:

**Declaration Location:** Detroit, Michigan at Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts, May 4, 2015  
**Campaign Website:** <https://www.bencarson.com/>  
**Campaign Email:** <https://www.bencarson.com/contact/>  
**Headquarters Address:** Unlisted  
**Headquarters Phone:** Unlisted  
**Campaign Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/realbencarson>  
**Campaign Twitter:** [@RealBenCarson](https://twitter.com/RealBenCarson) 1.16 million followers

## Positions on the Arts

### Personal Arts Background

- Carson declared his candidacy for President at the Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts in Detroit, MI on May 4, 2015. Arts performances took place at the event, including a rendition of the national anthem featuring his wife, Candy Carson, playing the violin and a number of choirs singing contemporary and patriotic songs. Carson also sang at the end of his announcement with his wife. (Sources: [C-SPAN](#), [The Washington Post](#))
- One of the steps Carson's mother took to improve the chances of success for her children was regularly taking them to the library, having recognized that people who read a lot "*had the ability to change the direction of their lives,*" Carson said. (Source: [The Blaze](#))
- Carson's wife Candy is a violinist and a pianist. She is involved in her local community orchestra and performs at the local hospital. (Source: [Carson Scholars](#))
- "*His wife and sons comprise the Carson Four, an accomplished string quartet.*" They performed in 2001 for the Baltimore Carson Scholars Awards Banquet, which featured Murray Carson, 17, B.J. Carson, 15, Rhoeyce Carson, 14, and their mom Candy Carson. (Sources: [Johns Hopkins Medicine](#), [Baltimore Sun](#))
- Carson is the writer of 4 bestselling books as well as a weekly opinion columnist at *The Washington Times* and founder of *American CurrentSee*, a monthly digital political journal geared towards African American conservatives. (Sources: [Amazon](#), [The Washington Times](#), [American CurrentSee](#))

### Notable Quotes

- "*One of the things that I used to do is, I used to love to memorize things. I memorized poems, memorized Bible verses,*" he said. "*And other people didn't know those things, and it began to make me feel that there was something special about me, and that I could learn things.*"- Ben Carson on his childhood during an interview with Kirk Cameron on the Glenn Beck Program (Source: [The Blaze](#))

### Policy Views on the Arts and Education

- Does not support federally mandated programs for education and opposes Common Core Education Standards. "*[Carson] has said that students who learn in home schools, private schools, or charter schools outperform those taught in traditional schools.*" (Source: [PBS](#))

### Examples of Actions on the Arts

- Founded the Carson Scholars Fund that "*supports two main initiatives: Carson Scholarships and the Ben Carson Reading project. Our scholarship program awards students who have embraced high levels of academic excellence and community service with \$1,000 college scholarships. The Ben Carson Reading Project provides funding to schools to build and maintain Ben Carson Reading Rooms - warm, inviting rooms where children can discover the joy of independent leisure reading. We award more than 500 scholarships annually. In total, we have awarded 4,800 scholarships across the country. Carson Scholarships winners have attended more than*

*300 colleges and universities and have received nearly \$2 million in scholarship funds to help finance their education.” (Source: [America the Beautiful](#), by Ben Carson, page 210)*

- The Carson Scholarship Fund which is part of the Carson Scholars Fund provides funding for different initiatives, including college scholarships to students in grades 4-11. The requirements for being a scholar are achieving a certain level of academic excellence (at least 3.75 GPA) and participating in humanitarian related activities, and many of the scholars additionally participate in arts activities. (Source: [Carson Scholars](#))
- Carson’s Iowa Political Director Ryan Rhodes spoke at the Iowa Arts Advocacy Caucus in August of 2015, where he expressed Dr. Carson’s love of the arts, his belief that arts in education is valuable, and his support for the charitable tax deduction. The full transcript of Rhodes’ remarks is below. (Source: [Americans for the Arts Action Fund](#))

## **Sample Advocacy Questions on the Arts**

- Walter Reed Hospital is doing groundbreaking work in incorporating the arts into patient care for wounded veterans. As a medical doctor, have you also seen first hand the healing power of the arts in patient care and speed of recovery?
- Dr. Carson, reading books and writing were two activities that had a particularly powerful influence on your successful rise from poverty. Do you believe arts education can help other children who are born into similarly dire economic straits ?
- Dr. Carson, you have said that as president you would significantly revise the tax code; would you protect the charitable tax deduction that keeps so many non-profit organizations, including arts organizations afloat?

## **Actions on the Arts during the 2016 Presidential Campaign**

- **Iowa Arts Advocacy Caucus**

On August 14, 2015, Carson surrogate and Iowa Political Director Ryan Rhodes briefed attendees on Dr. Carson’s background and attitudes towards the arts. Senior Director of State and Local Government Affairs at Americans for the Arts Jay Dick asked Rhodes about Carson’s position on the charitable giving tax deduction.

**Ryan Rhodes:** Thank you to everybody for coming today. I know you probably wish you could hear from Ben, and he could articulate this far better than I can, but as somebody who has been a world renowned surgeon, and whose wife is a really accomplished violinist, he has a passion about the arts and culture. One of the stories I’ve heard on the stump multiple times from Ben is how he used to sit in the Detroit Public Library and read through all the books of composers and artists. People in Detroit didn’t quite get it. Ben says, “I would go out and tell them about Van Gogh, and they said you’re putting gas in the van, go!”

But anyhow... their whole family, on Saturday nights, (although they don't really get the opportunity much anymore) would get together and play instruments as a family band. They are very, very talented and it is something close to their hearts because they really do believe that these things encourage the mind and that an all-encompassing education including the arts helps bring the whole mind together. He started a fund called Carson Scholars Fund, a nonprofit focused primarily on education, and the arts is a major part of that education.

At Florida Atlantic University, [Ben Carson's wife] Candy performed a violin concert, and even opened Ben's speech with the national anthem. One of the things that I can say is we probably take them on the stump too much and don't give them a chance to use their talents right now, but the arts is something very close to their heart and I think you'll see more of that. So, I encourage you to come out and meet Ben and meet Candy and ask them questions about the arts because they'd love to talk about it, especially because it is something that isn't politics. We'd love to see you out there. Thank you guys for having me, and enjoy the rest of your day.

**Jay Dick:** One question before you go - we were talking out front about the charitable tax deduction and how some have come out saying that they should be eliminated. What is Dr. Carson's position on that?

**Ryan Rhodes:** Dr. Carson does want a complete overhaul of the tax code, but as it sits I'm sure he supports the tax credit for nonprofits, because the Carson Scholars Fund is something that they are really involved with, and I think that [the charitable tax deduction] is in line with a tax plan he supports. But he does want to overhaul the tax code so that everybody pays less. Thank you.