



**To:** Arts Action Fund Members  
**From:** Americans for the Arts Action Fund  
**Date:** 8 August 2016  
**Re:** Bernie Sanders and the Arts\*

\*Note: Bernie Sanders [formally endorsed](#) Hillary Clinton on July 12, 2016.



**Name:** Bernie Sanders  
**Party:** Democrat  
**Born:** 8 September 1941, Brooklyn, New York  
**Previous Public Offices Held:** U.S. Senator from Vermont, 2007-present; U.S. Congressman from Vermont (At-large) 1991-2007; Mayor of Burlington, 1981-1989;  
**Other Jobs Held:** Director of the nonprofit organization *American People's Historical Society*  
**Educational Background:** B.A. Political Science, University of Chicago and Brooklyn College, 1964



**2016 Presidential Campaign Information:**

**Declaration Location:** Announced on 26 May 2015 at Waterfront Park in Burlington, VT (It is notable that Sanders secured the land for this park while serving as Mayor of Burlington).

**Campaign Website:** <https://berniesanders.com/>

**Campaign Email:** [bernie@bernie.org](mailto:bernie@bernie.org)

**Headquarters Address:** Bernie 2016  
P.O. Box 905  
Burlington, VT 05402

**Headquarters Phone:** 802-862-1505

**Campaign Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/berniesanders>

**Campaign Twitter:** [@BernieSanders](#) 3.18 million followers

## Positions on the Arts

### **Personal Arts Background**

- Sanders has worked as a filmmaker and a freelance writer in support of leftist causes. (Source: [biography.com](http://biography.com))
- Recorded an album in 1987 entitled *We Shall Overcome*, a collection of speeches and protest songs. (Source: [USA Today](http://USA Today))
- Through interviews with Vermont constituents, Sanders is known to enjoy “populist art.” He embodies the “can-do” and self-reliant spirit of Vermont, and sees the arts as another citizen-driven initiative fueled by this spirit. Sanders strongly believes in the arts’ ability to break down cultural barriers, and that art can be used for cultural diplomacy.
- As a supporter of military veterans, Sanders has supported the Walter Reed Healing Arts Partnership.
- Sanders believes an investment in education is an investment in society and helps lower the unemployment rate, and has stated that it is significantly less expensive to send a person to college for a year than it costs to house an inmate in prison.

## Examples of Actions Taken on the Arts

### **Bernie Sanders’ Annual Choir Concert**

- In March of 2015 Sanders hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Bernie Sanders Concert, featuring several Vermont high school choirs. He believes that the power to change the country’s direction lies with the younger generation, which is part of his motivation for organizing the concert. (Source: [sanders.senate.gov](http://sanders.senate.gov))
- Sanders gave a speech at the concert addressing the importance and benefits of arts education and discussing how music teaches cooperation, requires harmony, has the ability to break down barriers, and is a valuable tool for cultural teaching. (Source: [sanders.senate.gov](http://sanders.senate.gov))
- Sanders has stated, “*I believe that this concert will give these Vermont students some deserved recognition, enable the young people to learn from each other, and will allow all of us to enjoy some wonderful performances,*” (Source: [sanders.senate.gov](http://sanders.senate.gov))

### **Burlington Waterfront Park**

- When Sanders was Mayor of Burlington, developers attempted to build condos on waterfront land. Sanders blocked this development, as he believed the land should be made available for the citizens of Burlington and Vermont by way of a public park. (Source: [Washington Times](http://Washington Times))
- The park is now used for many cultural events. It was once home to a festival called the Burlington Chew Chew, and is now used for the Discovery Jazz Festival and an annual music festival known as Grand Point North, presented by Grace Potter and the Nocturnals. (Sources: [discoverjazz.com](http://discoverjazz.com), [grandpointnorth.com](http://grandpointnorth.com), [WCAX](http://WCAX))

## **Congressional Arts Voting Record**

- Between 2004 and 2014 Sanders earned an A+ score on all of the Americans for the Arts Action Fund Congressional Arts Report Cards for his votes in support of the arts in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives, respectively (Source: Congressional Arts Report Cards, [Americans for the Arts Action Fund](#)).

## **Arts and the Economy in Vermont**

- The arts industry in Vermont has a \$443.5 million impact on the state's economy each year. (Source: [Main Street Landing](#))
- The creative industries support 6,361 jobs which collectively earn nearly \$197.3 million in wages and benefits. (Source: [Main Street Landing](#))
- The state and local government collect \$19.4 million in taxes from the creative industries each year. (Source: [Main Street Landing](#))

## **Americans for the Arts Facts & Figures for Vermont:**

- Creative Industries: There are 6,825 people employed by 2,204 Arts-Related businesses. This represents 4.6% of all businesses and 2.0% of all employees in Vermont (Source: [Americans for the Arts](#))
- Economic Impact: In Windham County alone, non profit arts organizations and their audiences spent \$10 million in Fiscal Year 2010, and contributed over \$800,000 of revenue to state and local governments (Source: [Americans for the Arts](#))
- In Fiscal Year 2016 the Vermont Arts Council received \$645,307 in legislative appropriations (Source: [Americans for the Arts](#))

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

- As a U.S. Senator and host of an annual student choir concert, you have spoken frequently about the role of the arts in education. As President, how would you make arts education part of your agenda?
- As Mayor of Burlington you invested in parks that became home to some popular jazz festivals and other community events. How did this impact the local economy and how do you see investing in the arts as a way to create jobs and opportunities for economic growth?
- Senator, during your time in Congress you have consistently received an A+ record of voting in support of the arts. As President would you move to increase funding for the arts?

## Actions on the Arts during the 2016 Presidential Campaign

### Video Statement to the Arts Action Fund

- On September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Sanders [sent a video](#) to the Arts Action Fund where he explained his position on the arts in detail. Excerpts of the video include:
- *"Shortly after I was elected mayor of Burlington, Vermont, I created the Burlington Arts Council, hoping to unleash the creativity of our residents and harness the untold benefits that investment in the arts bring to communities."*
- *"We collaborated with our schools, recognizing that a strong introduction to the arts fuels the imagination, and teaches children to be expressive."*
- *"I have continued my longstanding commitment to the arts and arts education during my time in Congress."*
- *"You have my promise that as President, I will be an Arts President. I will continue to advocate strongly for robust funding of the arts in our cities, schools and public spaces."*
- *"Art is speech. Art is what life is about!"*  
(Source: [Sanders' video to the Arts Action Fund](#))
- Much of what Sanders says in the video is based on an earlier letter that Sanders sent to the Arts Action Fund for its [Iowa Arts Advocacy Caucus event](#) (Source: [Sanders' letter to the Iowa Arts Advocacy Caucus](#))