



**To:** Arts Action Fund Members  
**From:** Americans for the Arts Action Fund  
**Date:** August 2, 2018  
**Re:** Bill Nelson and the Arts, 2018 Candidate for Florida U.S. Senate

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**Name:** Bill Nelson  
**Party:** Democrat  
**Occupation:** U.S Senator from Florida  
**Incumbent:** Yes  
**Years Served:** 2001-Present, 17 years  
**Born:** September 29, 1942 (age 75) in Miami, FL  
**Previous Public Offices Held:** Treasurer, Insurance Commissioner, and Fire Marshal of Florida (1995-2001), Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Florida (1979-1991), Member of the Florida House of Representatives from the 47<sup>th</sup> district (1972-1978).  
**Other Positions:** Served in the Vietnam War in U.S. Army Reserves on active duty and as a captain (1968-1971). Nelson was admitted to the Florida bar in 1968 and began practicing law in 1970. In 1986, Nelson became the second sitting member of Congress to travel into space. He was a Payload Specialist on Space Shuttle Columbia's STS-61-C mission.  
**Educational Background:** Received his Bachelor of Arts from Yale University and his Juris Doctor from the University of Virginia.

**Contact Information:**

- Campaign Website: <https://www.nelsonforsenate.com/>
- Headquarters Address: 972 West Whitmire Drive Melbourne, FL 32935
- Headquarters Phone: N/A

**Social Media Platforms:**

- Facebook: @BillNelsonForSenate 26.7K followers
- Twitter: @NelsonForSenate 6.3k followers
- Instagram: @nelsonforsenate 370 followers

### 2018 General Campaign Prediction:

- Toss Up, Lean D (Source: [Cook Political Report](#))
- Last General Election: 55.2% (Source: [Cook Political Report](#))
- Last Primary Election: 78.8% (Source: [Cook Political Report](#))

### Personal Arts Background:

- Nelson published a book about his spaceflight experience in 1988 called *Mission: An American Congressman's Voyage to Space*. In the book, Nelson recounts his voyage into space and offers insights into the long-range economic and sociologic impacts of the space program on commerce, research, technology, education, and politics (Source: [Amazon](#)).

### Notable Arts Quotes:

- *"The list of honors he has received in his lifetime is impressive and reflects the impact that he has had on American music and culture. His music cannot be categorized or limited to one genre, which cannot be said of many artists. He was influenced by all types of music, and his music in turn influenced all types of artists—from rhythm and blues to country artists to rock and roll."* – Bill Nelson said in a statement on June 16, 2004 recognizing the accomplishments and contributions of Ray Charles to the world of music (Source: [Vote Smart](#)).

### Arts Action Fund Congressional Report Card:

- [2016 Congressional Report Card](#): Did not receive a thumbs up.
- [2014 Congressional Report Card](#): Thumbs up
- [2012 Congressional Report Card](#): B

### Examples of Actions on the Arts

- **NEA Funding:**
  - Voted yes to pass a conference report (HR 2361) that appropriates \$27.73 billion for the Department of the Interior, environment and related agencies for FY 2006. Conference report adopted by the senate with a vote of 99 to 1 on July 29, 2005 (Source: [Congress.Gov](#)).
- **Tax Bills:**
  - Voted no on *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* (HR 1) sponsored by Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX) which would double the standard deduction limiting specific incentives for income tax deductions of gifts to charity, becoming severely limited to only the top five percent of taxpayers who itemize their deductions. The Senate voted 51 to 48 on December 13, 2017 to pass the bill in a party-line vote. (Source: [New York Times](#))
- **Every Student Succeeds Act:**
  - Vote on S.1177—Final legislation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, now called the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), replacing No Child Left Behind on December 9, 2015. (Source: [2016 Congressional Arts Report Card](#))

- **Letters:**
  - Cosigned a “Dear Colleague” letter on March 16, 2018, asking Senate appropriators to fund the NEA and NEH at no less than \$155 million in FY 2019. The letter was led by late Representative Louise Slaughter. (Source: [Arts Action Fund](#))
  - Cosigned a "Dear Colleague" letter on January 23, 2014, asking Senate tax leaders to protect the full value and scope of the charitable deduction during any comprehensive tax reform efforts. (Source: [2014 Congressional Arts Report Card](#))

**Arts Membership:** N/A

**Information on Arts and the Economy in Florida:**

- In Florida, arts and culture was a \$33.4 billion industry—equivalent to 3.8 percent of the state economy—in 2015. There were a total of 245,652 arts and culture industry jobs.<sup>1</sup>
- A 2017 analysis of Dun & Bradstreet data found 58,162 businesses employed 227,843 people in Florida involved in the creation or distribution of the arts—3.92 percent of all businesses and 2.07 percent of all employees.<sup>2</sup>

**Sample Advocacy Questions on the Arts:**

- Senator Nelson, nonprofit arts organizations are charities, and on average, 25 percent of their annual budgets rely on donations made by individual taxpayers to serve the public good. Unfortunately, the pool of itemizers has been significantly diminished as result of the recent changes in the federal tax reform law. Would you support a Universal Charitable Deduction, so all taxpayers have the incentive to donate?
- The budget of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was cut in half during the 1990s. With its current funding of \$153 million, the NEA spends just 47 cents per American—half the cost of a pack of gum. Would you support a plan to increase federal arts funding to the NEA to \$1 per American, so that arts organizations in your state or district can present even more accessible arts programs for all its residents?
- With the implementation of *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), states now have more responsibility for providing a well-rounded education – including the arts. Would you support full funding (\$1.6 billion) of the Well-Rounded Education provisions of ESSA, including data collection of arts education programs by the states and advocating for the integration of the arts into STEM education?

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<sup>1</sup>Arts and cultural production are defined as those industries that produce arts and culture related commodities and generally follow the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS). Employment estimates for ACP-related industries are for “direct” employment. [Arts and Culture Production Satellite Account](#) (ACPSA), 2015; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and National Endowment for the Arts, 2018.

<sup>2</sup>Findings count active U.S. businesses registered with Duns & Bradstreet in the following categories: museums and collections; performing arts; visual art/photography; film, radio, and television; design and publishing; schools and services. [Creative Industries: Business & Employment in the Arts](#), Americans for the Arts, 2017.

**About ArtsVote2018:**

- The mission of ArtsVote2018 is to advance the role of arts in the 2018 midterm elections by providing arts advocates, arts leaders, elected officials, and media with needed information to effectively advocate for the arts.