



To: Arts Action Fund Members
From: Americans for the Arts Action Fund
Date: August 2, 2018
Re: Sheldon Whitehouse and the Arts, 2018 Candidate for Rhode Island U.S. Senate



Name: Sheldon Whitehouse
Party: Democrat
Occupation: United States Senator from Rhode Island
Incumbent: Yes
Years Served: 2007-Present, 11 years
Born: October 20, 1955 (age 62), New York City, New York, U.S.
Previous Public Offices Held: 71st Attorney General of Rhode Island (1999-2003), United States Attorney for the District of Rhode Island (1993-1998).
Other Positions: Whitehouse worked as a clerk for Judge Richard F. Neely of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia (1982-1983). He also worked in the Rhode Island Attorney General's office as a special assistant attorney general (1985-1990).
Educational Background: Received his Bachelor of Arts from Yale University, and later received his Juris Doctor from the University of Virginia School of Law.

Contact Information:

- Campaign Website: <https://whitehouseforsenate.com/>
- Campaign Email: N/A
- Campaign Mailing Address: N/A
- Campaign Phone Number: 401-489-2501

Social Media Platforms:

- Facebook: @SheldonWhitehouse 12.6K followers
- Twitter: @SheldonforRI 822 followers
- Instagram: @senwhitehouse 2.7k followers

2018 General Campaign Prediction:

- Likely D (Source: [Cook Political Report](#))
- Last General Election: 64.8% (Source: [Cook Political Report](#))

Personal Arts Background:

- Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse participated as a panelist in a forum about the role art can play in starting conversations about the environment at the Newport Art Museum on July 9, 2018 (Source: [NPR](#)).

Notable Arts Quotes:

- *"We are fortunate to have a disproportionate amount of world-class creative talent in Rhode Island, which pays dividends to our quality of life and our local economy."* – Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse.
- *"While investments in the arts and humanities represent only a tiny sliver of the federal budget, these funds can have a multiplying effect on Rhode Island jobs and the economy. I will fight to protect our creative sector from any funding cuts proposed by the Trump administration."* - Whitehouse statement to support Arts in RI amid the potential Trump cuts (Source: [Press Release](#)).
- *"These federal dollars will enable Rhode Island artists to spread the word about Rhode Island history, get young people excited about music, extend the performing arts to communities throughout the state, and build new markets for their work. Congratulations to all the recipients, and thank you for the important contributions you make to life in Rhode Island."* – Whitehouse statement on the \$863,000 boost from NEA grants (Source: [Press Release](#)).
- *"I'm honored to represent the Ocean State on this distinguished panel. The NEA supports Rhode Island artists, performances, and educational opportunities that make our communities richer, our economy stronger, and our lives more meaningful. Our great senator, Claiborne Pell, championed the NEA, and I'm proud to have the opportunity to assist this organization in its important work."* – Whitehouse statement on joining the National Council on the Arts (Source: [Vote Smart](#)).

Arts Action Fund Congressional Report Cards:

- [2016 Congressional Report Card](#): Thumbs up
- [2014 Congressional Report Card](#): Thumbs up
- [2012 Congressional Report Card](#): A+

Arts Action Fund PAC support this election cycle as of 8-2-18:

- \$1,000 on 1/17/2017

Examples of Actions on the Arts

- **Tax Cuts and Jobs Act:**
 - 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](#))

- **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: [2016 Congressional Arts Report Card](#))
- Cosigned a “Dear Colleague” letter on April 8, 2014, asking Senate appropriators to fund the NEA and NEH at \$155 million. The letter was initiated by Senator Tom Udall (D-NM).
- Cosigned a “Dear Colleague” letter on April 25, 2013, asking Senate appropriators to fund the NEA and NEH at \$154 million each. The letter was initiated by Senator Tom Udall (D-NM). (Source: [2014 Congressional Arts Report Card](#))
- Cosigned a "Dear Colleague" letter on April 2, 2014, asking Senate appropriators to support "robust" funding for the Office of Museum Services in FY 2015. (Source: [2014 Congressional Arts Report Card](#))
- 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](#))

Stance on Issues

- **Arts Education:**

- Sen Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) led efforts to secure support for inclusion of a literacy and arts education program within the Senate’s consideration of the new K-12 education law. (Source: [Whitehouse for Senate](#))

Membership:

- Whitehouse has been a member in the Senate Cultural Caucus since 2014. He is currently serving as a member in the 115th Congress. There are 34 members and the list is maintained by office of Caucus Co-Chairs, Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) and Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) (Source: [Americans for the Arts](#)).
- Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) served on the National Council of the Arts from 2011-2013 and now serves as an ex-officio member. The National Council on the Arts, the advisory committee to the National Endowment on the Arts (Source: [Arts.Gov](#)).

Awards:

- Sen. Whitehouse received the Americans for the Arts Congressional Arts Leadership award in 2011 (Source: [Americans for the Arts](#)).
- Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse was awarded on June 27, 2018 with the National Music Publishers Association Presidents award (Source: [The Paris Post Intelligencer](#)).

Information on the Arts and the Economy in Rhode Island:

- In Rhode Island, arts and culture was a \$1.8 billion industry—equivalent to 3.3 percent of the state economy—in 2015. There were a total of 17,902 arts and culture industry jobs.¹
- A 2017 analysis of Dun & Bradstreet data found 2,305 businesses employed 13,536 people in Rhode Island involved in the creation or distribution of the arts—4.25 percent of all businesses and 2.18 percent of all employees.²

Sample Advocacy Questions on the Arts:

- Senator Whitehouse, as you know 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?
- 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. The charitable tax deduction incentive is currently only available to individuals who itemize their tax returns. Would you support a Universal Charitable Deduction, so all taxpayers have the incentive to donate?

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.

¹Arts 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.

²Findings 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.