



To: Arts Action Fund Members
From: Americans for the Arts Action Fund
Date: August 2, 2018
Re: Bernie Sanders and the Arts, 2018 Candidate for Vermont U.S. Senate



Name: Bernie Sanders
Party: Democrat
Occupation: United States Senator from Vermont
Incumbent: Yes
Years Served: 2007-Present, 11 years
Born: September 8, 1941 (age 76), New York City, U.S.
Previous Public Offices Held: Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Vermont's at-large district (1991-2007), 37th Mayor of Burlington (1981-1989).
Other Positions: He worked as a carpenter, filmmaker, and writer who created and sold "radical film strips" and other educational materials to schools. Sanders began his electoral political career in 1971 as a member of the Liberty Union Party. Ran for President in the 2016 Democratic Primary.
Educational Background: Received his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Chicago.

Contact Information:

- Campaign Website: <https://act.berniesanders.com/>
- Campaign Email: info@berniesanders.com
- Campaign Mailing Address: Post Office Box 391 Burlington, VT 05402
- Campaign Phone Number: 802-862-1505

Social Media Platforms:

- Facebook: @berniesanders 4.9M followers
- Twitter: @BernieSanders, 8.9M followers
- Instagram: @berniesanders 2.4M followers

2018 General Campaign Prediction:

- Solid D (Source: [Cook Political Report](#))
- Last General Election: 71.1% (Source: [Cook Political Report](#))

Personal Arts Background:

- Sanders has worked as a filmmaker and a freelance writer in support of leftist causes (Source: [biography.com](#)).
- Recorded an album in 1987 entitled *We Shall Overcome*, a collection of speeches and protest songs (Source: [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 (Source: [Arts.Gov](#)).

Notable Arts Quotes:

- Bernie Sanders’ Annual Choir Concert: 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](#))
- In March of 2015 Sanders hosted the 2nd 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](#))
- 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](#))
- *“She represents part of what is best about our state: an ongoing creativity that is the hallmark of much in Vermont, a creativity which brings forth not just poetry but hand-built furniture, innovative small businesses, and popular music. As just one instance of that creativity let me cite her husband Tom, a painter whose works in mixed media were recently exhibited in a show of his work, “Elements of Diversion,” at the New England Gallery.”* – Sanders speech when awarding Vermont Resident with the Robert Penn Warren Award for Poetry (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+
- [2010 Congressional Report Card](#): A+

Examples of Actions on the Arts

- **Funding for National Endowment for the Arts:**
 - 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 House with a vote of 410 to 10 on July 28, 2005 (Source: [Congress.Gov](#)).
 - Voted nay to pass a conference report (HR2361) that appropriates \$27.73 billion for the Department of the Interior, environment and related agencies for FY 2006. Bill Passed in the House with a vote of 329 – 89 on May 19, 2005 (Source: [Congress.Gov](#)).
 - Voted yes on amendment (H Amdt 753) that restores \$98 million in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts. Amendment Adopted in House with a vote of 253 to 173 on July 21, 1998 (Source: [Congress.Gov](#)).
 - Voted nay to override a Presidential veto (HR 1977) on a bill that appropriates \$12.49 billion to the Department of the Interior and related agencies for fiscal year 1996, among other provisions. Veto Override Failed in the House with a vote of 239 to 177 on January 4, 1996 (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](#))
 - Voted nay to adopt a conference report (HR 4297) that authorizes and extends \$69.96 billion in tax credits and cuts through 2010. This bill includes Section 204: Provides an election to treat sales of certain musical compositions or copyrights as capital gains if created by the taxpayer (Sec. 204). Conference Report Adopted in the House with a vote of 244 to 185 on May 10, 2006 (Source: [Congress.Gov](#)).

- **Every Student Succeeds Act:**
 - Voted yes on S.1177—Senate bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, titled *Every Child Achieves Act* (ECAA) on July 16, 2015. (Source: [2016 Congressional Arts Report Card](#))
 - Voted yes 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 March 16, 2016, asking Senate appropriators to fund the NEA and NEH at no less than \$149.8 million in FY 2017. The letter was led by Sen. Tom Udall (D-NM). (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). (Source: [2014 Congressional Arts Report Card](#))
- 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](#))

Membership:

- Sanders has been a member in the Senate Cultural Caucus since 2016. 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](#)).

Information on the Arts and the Economy in Vermont:

- In Vermont, arts and culture was a \$1billion industry—equivalent to 3.2 percent of the state economy—in 2015. There were a total of 10,608 arts and culture industry jobs.¹
- A 2017 analysis of Dun & Bradstreet data found 2,021 businesses employed 6,874 people in Vermont involved in the creation or distribution of the arts—4.58 percent of all businesses and 1.83 percent of all employees.²

Sample Advocacy Questions on the Arts:

- Senator Sanders, 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.

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.

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.