

SARA BYERS

Candidate for House District 7, Democrat

Recognizing that job creation is a top priority in the current economic condition in Oregon and that investment in the creative arts & culture sector function as a jobs-driver, what policies or practices will you implement to continue to grow jobs in the sector and/or encourage more creative businesses to locate in Oregon?

Oregon needs to educate its young people more thoroughly and more creatively. Having the shortest school year in the country is simply not acceptable. I'm proud to be endorsed by all three teachers unions (OEA, OSEA and AFT-Oregon). We need to do more than "teach to the test," however. Arts programs in the school produce adults with creative problem solving skills and positive attitudes. Communities that offer creative programs in their schools attract top-flight companies, and that in turn creates good paying local jobs and healthy communities.

The Oregon Cultural Trust is an innovative, statewide private-public partnership raising significant new contributed funds. Each year, the Trust is directed by law to keep 58% of its annual revenues in the Trust endowment, and distribute 42% in direct support of Oregon's arts, heritage and humanities. Donors to the Trust are eligible for an Oregon income tax credit for contributions, after first making a matching gift to one or more of nearly 1,300 cultural nonprofits. Do you support the current Cultural Trust tax credit?

I absolutely support the current Cultural Trust tax credit and would fight any attempt to eliminate it. My husband and I have taken advantage of it with our end of the year charitable giving. It's a win-win proposition for the arts in Oregon and for individuals supporting their favorite Oregon arts organizations.

During 2009, \$1.8 million dollars was "swept" by the Legislature from the Cultural Trust for general government purposes to rebalance the state budget. Would you support statutory language that clearly describes the purpose and better protects the donor intent of contributions made for the purpose of growing the Trust endowment?

Yes, I would support legislation to protect the Cultural Trust dollars from being "swept" into the General Fund. These are extraordinarily tough economic times for Oregon, but there are areas of government waste and redundancy that can be cut without robbing the arts.

In what specific ways have you supported arts and culture – as a private citizen, as a public or private employee, and/or as an elected official?

Not only have my husband and I supported the Oregon Cultural Trust, but we've been lifelong contributors to local arts organizations: from the Umpqua and Eugene Symphony Orchestras, Eugene Opera, Eugene Ballet Company (which our daughter danced with for years) and our local Umpqua Modern Dance Project (UMDP) and the Umpqua Valley Arts Association. I'll continue to support the arts as a state legislator just as I have in my private life.