



## RHODE ISLAND CITIZENS FOR THE ARTS

*Building coalition to advance Rhode Island's creative communities*

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### **COMMUNITY OUTRAGED BY GOVERNOR'S PROPOSAL TO ELIMINATE STATE'S INVESTMENT IN THE CREATIVE SECTOR**

Community Leaders React

Providence, RI (February 2, 2010) – On the heels of the Governor's FY11 budget announcement, community leaders today are outraged by his proposal to nearly eliminate the state's entire investment in the creative sector. The Governor proposed eliminating state funding for peer-reviewed grants through the RI State Council for the Arts, the 1% for the art public arts program and the motion picture tax credit.

"The amount of money being eliminated in the Governor's budget is a drop in the bucket for state spending," states Lisa Carnevale, Executive Director of RI Citizens for the Arts. "In FY10, the arts budget totaled just 0.064% of the entire state budget. Yet, these small dollars have incubated innovation and economic development in Rhode Island for years, and have put Rhode Island on the map. Cutting these funds is bad policy and bad business for our state."

House Majority Whip Peter Kilmartin (D-Pawtucket) states, "We have clear evidence that the creative community is a growing small business sector that has generated positive economic benefits for cities and towns throughout our State. The Governor's proposal completely disregards this, and is frankly, out of step with what we need most at this time: to support small businesses and strengthen the assets the State benefits from currently."

Rhode Island is home to over 2,500 creative industry businesses that employ over 11,500 people, according to Dun & Bradstreet registered businesses. Between 2007 and 2008, employment in this sector grew by 5.1% amidst a decline in employment overall through the State. Further, studies have proven the arts and creative sector are incredibly valuable in Rhode Island. In Sovereign Bank's 2008 Economic Outlook Survey, the arts and cultural attractions were rated the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest strength in Providence (at 61%) by business leaders, far surpassing quality of health care (25%), cost of living (9%), and economic development efforts (6%).

"As a restaurant in the downtown Theatre district, a thriving arts and cultural community is incredibly important to us," expresses Ellen Gracyalny, proprietor of Gracie's Restaurant on Washington Street in Providence. "Activity from the surrounding cultural venues stimulates our business. Without it, we would have to lay off staff, and minimize operations."

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For every \$1 invested in the arts through the RI State Council on the Arts, another \$21.55 is leveraged in outside funding. The state's investment stimulates more funding for organizations that hire locally and buy locally. An Americans for the Arts study showed non-profit arts and cultural organizations generate \$111.8 million in economic activity in Providence alone.

"We are completely dismayed," says Bill Brackett, Chairman of the RI Council on the Arts. "We understand these are difficult economic times in Rhode Island and have continuously worked with the administration to address this issue. The Governor's proposal jeopardizes the return on investment the State has made through the arts."

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RI Citizens for the Arts (RI CFA) is a statewide advocacy organization that serves as the voice of the diverse arts and creative communities, to raise awareness and support from the public and private sector. The group organizes and educates citizens around initiatives that strengthen these communities. For more information, contact Lisa Carnevale, 401-457-8312, [lisa@ricitizensforarts.org](mailto:lisa@ricitizensforarts.org).

RI State Council on the Arts was established in 1967 and serves as a catalyst for the advancement, appreciation and promotion of excellence in the arts, by encouraging leadership, participation, and education in the arts for all Rhode Islanders. For more information, contact Randall Rosenbaum, 401-222-2883, [randy@arts.ri.gov](mailto:randy@arts.ri.gov).