

# U.S. SENATE FOR NEW YORK – CLASS III

## WENDY LONG, Republican, Conservative, Reform

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

## ALEX MERCED, Libertarian

**Office Sought** US Senate

**Current Occupation & Employer** Training Specialist for Greico Financial Training

**Please list your top 3 priorities if elected.**

Curbing Policies that raise the cost of living in housing, education, and healthcare –  
Reducing spending to reduce taxation to increase individual post-tax income and  
encourage investment – Fight back against prohibition policies of any form

### **What is the role of arts and culture in community development and revitalization?**

Creativity is a product of human freedom, the lack of barriers in one's imagine of what's possible, seeing possibility even when barriers are presented. Creativity breeds the innovations that make our lives better and cost of living lower. Creativity creates the culture that brings us joy and maximizes our leisure time. Creativity is Freedom, Freedom brings creativity. This is why I fight for individual freedom and choice, because I have a deep conviction that to breed creativity we need a policy environment that doesn't limit the possibility of human creativity.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Western New York?**

I do not want to play favorites with one form of culture vs. another as my opponent Chuck Schumer has had in the past. I am not one to decide what the best culture is, I want to enable all cultures to thrive by freeing up resources with things like across the board reduction in taxation which will increase the opportunities for patronage of the arts of all types. Creating specialized tax cuts or credits picks winners or losers, I rather the artist make the case to the patron with the beauty of their art instead of a politician through a specially target subsidy or tax cut.

### **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Western New York?**

As a Libertarian, to me it's up to individuals to promote the culture, heritage, and values they want to promote. Although through removing policy barriers to doing so (red tape around charities, lower taxes, etc.) I can help enable people to be more able to advocate and promote the culture and values they want.

### **In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Western New York?**

By fighting for diversity in education by eliminating the costly federal standardization of schooling across the country we can enable the freedom and the resources for local communities to bring back creative programs to their schools and determine which programs breed creativity the best I will fight for the freedom, and free up the resources, it's up to people to turn their new found freedom and resources into the world they want to see.

**The budget of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was cut in half during the 1990s. With its current funding of \$148 million, the NEA spends just 46 cents per American. 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 of its residents?**

No, I do not support federal subsidies as those dollars often come with strings attached and disenfranchise forms of culture that are not deemed "high" enough to receive those funds. I rather return those funds to individuals and allow states and local communities decide how their resources can best be used to promote their local cultural works.

**Nonprofit arts organizations are community-based charities that specifically rely on donations made by individual taxpayers for a quarter of their budgets on average. Would you support the preservation of the charitable tax deduction for nonprofit arts organizations?**

Yes, I would like to make it a tax credit so the incentive to charitably donate even greater.

**CHARLES SCHUMER, Democrat, Working Families, Independent, Women's Equality**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

**ROBIN LAVERNE WILSON, Green Party**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

# U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (CONGRESS), 23RD DISTRICT

**JOHN PLUMB, Democrat, Working Families**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

**THOMAS REED, Republican, Conservative,  
Independent, Reform**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

# U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (CONGRESS), 26TH DISTRICT

**BRIAN HIGGINS, Democrat, Working Families,  
Women's Equality**

**Office Sought** US House of Representatives, NY-26

**Current Occupation & Employer** Member of US House of Representatives; residents of NY-26

**Please list your top 3 priorities if elected.**

- 1.) Full funding of the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA).
- 2.) Increased funding for arts education in public elementary and secondary schools- specifically increasing funding for elementary and secondary education curriculum to include art and technology coursework.
- 3.) Continued federal support and advocacy for local WNY arts and cultural organizations.

**What is the role of arts and culture in community development and revitalization?**

A strong arts and cultural community goes hand in hand with economic development. Over the last decade, many young people are returning to Western New York because of business opportunities and the great quality of life we offer. These individuals are starting businesses in the technology and design fields and are drawn to the existing talent and resources in the local arts community.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Western New York?**

I believe that the federal government should enhance the regional arts and cultural local leaders, such as the Albright Knox, Burchfield Penny, and the Theater of Youth, in listening to their needs and supporting their important work. I am pleased by the cohesive local forces working with all levels of government to contribute to the New Buffalo.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Western New York?**

I worked to secure \$300,000 in funding through the Dept of the Interior for the Niagara Falls Heritage Area to provide grants to organizations throughout such as the NACC. We worked to support the Niagara Shuttle to provide direct, free transportation to more than a dozen top cultural destinations in the Niagara region. My office has worked with the Albright Knox and the Science Museum to bring the arts to Canalside and Tiff Nature Preserve. Incorporating public art throughout the community is an important component of creating unique public places that draw tourists to our region.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Western New York?**

I believe that art not only improves community life quality but also helps us to understand our history, comprehend our role in the world today and prepare for the future. As a father I know how beneficial the arts are in enriching our education system; increasing funding for art education is fundamental to developing a lifelong relationship with the arts. Since my election to Congress, I have encouraged students to participate in the Congressional Art Competition and have served as a judge for the Albright Knox Art ALIVE showcasing the remarkable talent of our youth and their educators.

**The budget of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was cut in half during the 1990s. With its current funding of \$148 million, the NEA spends just 46 cents per American. 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 of its residents?**

Absolutely. In the decade since my election to Congress, I have consistently supported full funding of the National Endowment of the Arts. However, I agree that the current request level of \$ 168 million is not enough. I support a monetary increase similar to the one you have proposed. Studies show that every dollar of investment in the arts yields a \$9 dollar return on investment in local communities; therefore it is fiscally responsible to increase direct funding to the NEA.

Nonprofit arts organizations are community-based charities that specifically rely on donations made by individual taxpayers for a quarter of their budgets on average.

**Would you support the preservation of the charitable tax deduction for nonprofit arts organizations?**

Yes. I have consistently supported maintaining the current level of charitable deductions. I am also a cosponsor H.R. 4948, the Arts- Museum Partnership Act which

would allow artists to take an income tax deduction for the fair market value of their work when they donate to a charitable collecting institution.

## SHELLY SCHRATZ, Republican, Conservative, Reform

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

## U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (CONGRESS), 27TH DISTRICT

## CHRIS COLLINS, Republican, Conservative, Independent, Reform

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

## DIANA KASTENBAUM, Democrat, Working Families, Women's Equality

**Office Sought** Congress NY 27

**Current Occupation & Employer** CEO Pinnacle MFG. CO, Inc.

**Please list your top 3 priorities if elected.**

Labor- increase minimum wage

Vets- funding for VA services

Women's Issues- prochoice & healthcare

### **What is the role of arts and culture in community development and revitalization?**

Artists are usually the first group to revitalize and gentrify older neighborhoods that have been on the decline. We have seen incredible neighborhoods spry up in some of our city's most desolate and abandoned areas. A community cannot thrive on business and government entities. Without the arts to fuel the soul, we are communities unable to express our unique spirits.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Western New York?**

Grants/funding should be available for artistic entities who wish to acquire and rehab/restore existing building.

NEA funding and NYS funding for the arts should increase to help artists.

A coalition of businesses should partner with artists organizations in the communities to help them use their cultural programs.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Western New York?**

Ad campaign similar to I Love NY

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Western New York?**

Arts should be part of the school curriculums

More internships available

All children need to be exposed to the arts and would institute a program to see that children can see theatre, dance, opera, music in our communities.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase grant funding for cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts if elected, and why?**

Yes

Several of the Regional Economic Development Council plans throughout the state include arts and culture as a priority or targeted industry, but the WNY plan only mentions it in the context of tourism. If elected, would you advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in the WNY REDC plan and for a cultural representative to sit on the council, and why?

Yes

## NYS SENATE, 59TH DISTRICT

### TOM CASEY, Democrat

**Office Sought** NYS Senate 59th District

**Current Occupation & Employer** Retired Environmental Engineer

**Please list your top 3 priorities if elected.**

My highest priority is ending the pervasive, democracy destroying, corruption that exists in Albany as it affects practically all other issues. Special interests controlling our legislators are writing our laws, not "the People." See my web page for 14 measures to reduce corruption including term limits and non-gerrymandered districts. Second, Improving New York's very poor business climate including critical jobs for the under

and unemployed. See web page's 13 proposals. Third, improving the academic and vocational educational achievement of all our students including the arts.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in community development and revitalization?**

The arts immensely contribute to the development of the "Beloved Community and sense of community." They educate our youth-our future community builders-of our common humanity (Huck Finn, Jane Austen, To Kill a Mocking Bird, the homeless exhibit at ArtSpace and the Blues) and the essential need to include all of our peoples in our community's revitalization. The art in our architecture from re-adapted/restored homes and buildings downtown to the Roycroft and a landscape architect's creation, Delaware Park, have contributed significantly to our lives, development and revitalization.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Western New York?**

Art and culture make major contributions to a healthy economy. Our extensive multi-cultural heritage is the foundation for continuing to welcome new immigrants who build our economy and restore neighborhoods. Careful public investment in A&C promotes economic development such as Just Buffalo, The Irish Classical Theater; Silo City; and the architects, landscape architects and entrepreneurs who have used our architectural history to revive neighborhoods and destinations with accompanying stronger tax-bases. Art in all its forms from Babel to our festivals generates economic activity and jobs.

### **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Western New York?**

I would continue the investment in historic tax-credits that are a public-private partnership that can continue to expand awareness of our heritage and attract tourist's such as the Michigan Street Corridor, Guarantee Building, industrial heritage sites and the Darwin Martin House. I would like to see this expand to more fully include our indigenous, first nation peoples, their history and culture. Key public spaces require government's investment and support such as our museums, parks and zoo.

### **In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Western New York?**

Education including strong art programs should always be one of our highest priorities beginning with language arts, and expanding to visual arts and music. Parents should have the freedom and right to choose a school where art has a major role in the pedagogy such as Performing Arts, Tapestry Charter or Waldorf schools. Dr. Christopher Emdin who through Hip-Hop is very successfully educating many children who would drop out is a leader in the denied ACE (Arch, Const, Engr) Charter School application in Buffalo. I support this and other parent empowering, publicly funded school options.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase grant funding for cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts if elected, and why?**

Hold steady with select increases based on a proven ability to contribute to the education of our children or our community's development. Why select increases? Because arts, while creators of economic activity, are also dependent on economic activity and New York's being the highest in combined local and state government taxation is one of the causes of our poor business climate.

**Several of the Regional Economic Development Council plans throughout the state include arts and culture as a priority or targeted industry, but the WNY plan only mentions it in the context of tourism. If elected, would you advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in the WNY REDC plan and for a cultural representative to sit on the council, and why?**

Yes, arts and culture should be included based on my response to the question above and there definitely should be a cultural representative on the council in order to continually make the case for arts inclusion.

**PATRICK GALLIVAN, Republican, Conservative, Independent, Reform**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

## **NYS SENATE, 60TH DISTRICT**

**JAMES DEPASQUALE, Green Party**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

**CHRISTOPHER JACOBS, Republican**

**Current Occupation & Employer:** Erie County Clerk

**Please list your top three priorities if elected.**

1. Economic Development and Job Creation
2. Funding Parity with downstate
3. Education Issue

**What is the role of arts and culture in community development and revitalization?**

Culture and the Arts have been and will continue to be a critical force in the



revitalization of Erie County. In our efforts to draw new people to the area and keep our young, arts and culture play a pivotal role — enhancing the quality of life and lifting the community spirit.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Western New York?**

Supplementing existing arts and cultural institutions and encouraging development of new venues will produce a multiplier benefits for WNY.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Western New York?**

I think we have major gains in this regards over the last few years. The Governor and regional development councils have recognized cultural tourism as legitimate economic force. It needs to go farther but it is a start. This does not happen overnight, it needs sustained focus, coordination and commitment from the public, private, and philanthropic sectors.

**In what ways would you support young people’s access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Western New York?** As a former school board member, I believe strongly in providing students access to the arts and culture on a regular basis. Of course, field trips are great but we must find more ways to expose them within their school environments and integrate arts and culture throughout the curricula.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase grant funding for cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts if elected, and why?**

Increase.

**Several of the Regional Economic Development Council plans throughout the state include arts and culture as a priority or targeted industry, but the WNY plan only mentions it in the context of tourism. If elected, would you advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in the WNY REDC plan and for a cultural representative to sit on the council, and why?**

As I mentioned earlier the regional council gave recognition and it was a good first step. Yes, I believe the arts should absolutely be included as the WNY REDC plan and a cultural representative should sit on the council.

## **AMBER SMALL, Democrat**

**Current Occupation and employer:** Executive Director, Parkside Community Association

**Please list your top three priorities if elected.**

For our region to prosper, we must bring fresh ideas to the table. Albany is infested with corruption, and sending another career politician will do little to clean up Albany. We need a political outsider with a track record of getting things done for their community to

champion ethics reform. My experience with my family's small business has provided me the understanding needed to reduce the obstacles business owners face. I will be a fierce advocate for repairing our outdated infrastructure to ensure the safety of our neighborhoods, boost our economy and better the quality of our water.

**What is the role of arts and culture in community development and revitalization?**

Arts and cultural play an incredibly important role in community development and revitalization. When fostered in a community, they bring along a sense of "togetherness" and breathe new life into an area. Beyond that, they are critical components to ensuring successful economic development. Arts and cultural events in Western New York were attended by 4.1 million people in 2014 and contributed \$157 million to our local economy.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Western New York?**

For Western New York to continue on the path towards future prosperity, we must foster the growth of a unique identity. We see this already with local businesses teaming up with our arts community to promote their products. By focusing on our regional culture, we can develop a recognizable identity that can lead to new investments in our economy. Streamlining government regulations for starting a new business is a major part of my platform, and I strongly believe that opening a path to new opportunities would be a boon to many of the unique cultures we find throughout the 60th district.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Western New York?**

Cleaning up our waterways will allow for more people to enjoy our greatest natural resource, Lake Erie, which played a major part in our region's growth, both economically and culturally. It is an embarrassment that our beaches are often closed because Albany has ignored our need for infrastructure improvements. I proposed my CleanNYWater initiative so that WNY can once again have beaches that we can enjoy without concern for our own health and that would benefit the economies of our waterfront communities such as Hamburg and Evans.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Western New York?**

Access to the arts is essential for developing young people's creative thinking skills, which are critical for success later in life. I strongly believe in reducing class sizes in our schools, increasing student's opportunities to express themselves creatively in the classroom. This has been a proven method of improving educational outcomes across the board and should be implemented locally. I will be an advocate in the Senate for ensuring that our public schools receive the funding they are entitled to in order to provide the high quality education our children are owed.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase grant funding for cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts if elected, and why?**

I would vote to increase grant funding for our cultural organizations. Developing our cultural institutions here in Western New York is necessary for our economic growth. Albany will continue to fund downstate cultural organizations, so we need a Senator who will fight to bring resources here to Western New York. Through our widely recognized Olmsted parks system and rich architectural history, we already have the foundation to regain our status as a world-renowned center for arts and cultural.

**Several of the Regional Economic Development Council plans throughout the state include arts and culture as a priority or targeted industry, but the WNY plan only mentions it in the context of tourism. If elected, would you advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in the WNY REDC plan and for a cultural representative to sit on the council, and why?**

The benefits of developing Western New York's arts and culture industry extend far beyond tourism. Our creative class has generated a burgeoning small business scene that has rejuvenated communities and created new jobs and wealth for our region. I would absolutely support this inclusion in the WNY REDC, plan as well as the addition of a cultural representative on the council.

## NYS SENATE, 61ST DISTRICT

**RUBEN CARTAGENA, Green Party**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

**ANDRE LISZKA, Working Families**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

**THOMAS LOUGHRAN, Democrat, Working Families, Women's Equality**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

**MICHAEL RAZENHOFER, Republican, Conservative, Independent, Reform**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

# NYS SENATE, 62ND DISTRICT

## ROBERT ORTT, Republican, Conservative, Independent, Reform

**Office Sought** New York State Senate

**Current Occupation & Employer** New York State Senate

**Please list your top 3 priorities if elected.**

Improving the Western New York and New York State economy.

Protecting and defending the Second Amendment.

Improving access to services for veterans and others with mental health needs.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in community development and revitalization?**

Arts and culture have played a pivotal role across Western New York. In communities where we have seen successful community development and community revitalization.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Western New York?**

We must build upon the progress that we have witnessed in revitalization and development efforts, specifically where arts and culture represent a critical component of that effort. Using those successes as models, I believe that our historic downtowns and small towns can successfully achieve similar results.

### **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Western New York?**

I consider our community's regional pride to be among the best in the nation. I would capitalize on that and fully integrate it into efforts to rediscover our historic past, highlight our present re-emergence, and develop a bright future.

### **In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Western New York?**

My hope is that our community's perspective shifts among youth from a place where they were born to a place that they would like to work, live, and raise a family. We must focus on coordination among the public, private, and non-profit worlds to develop our communities. Successful coordination can simultaneously bolster our economy, arts and culture, and education – a lasting formula for community success.

### **Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase grant funding for cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts if elected, and why?**

I support increased funding so long as it is supported by the overall fiscal position of the state. If and when that does not exist, I would try to hold funding steady.

**Several of the Regional Economic Development Council plans throughout the state include arts and culture as a priority or targeted industry, but the WNY plan only mentions it in the context of tourism. If elected, would you advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in the WNY REDC plan and for a cultural representative to sit on the council, and why?**

I have and would continue to do so. I believe arts and culture can be an economic engine as much as an

## **NYS SENATE, 63RD DISTRICT**

**TIMOTHY KENNEDY, Democrat, Working Families, Independent, Women's Equality**

**Office Sought** State Senator, 63rd District

**Current Occupation & Employer** State Senator, 63rd District

**Please list your top 3 priorities if elected.**

1. Ensuring that WNY families and children are supported and have the same opportunities afforded to others across New York State, including funding for education and access to critical child care subsidies. 2. Cutting through red tape for businesses, and revamping rules and regulations so that they can more easily put down roots, expand their footprint and create jobs. 3. Partnering with environmental advocates to lead the remediation of our most valuable natural resource: our waterways.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in community development and revitalization?**

As Buffalo continues to experience a renaissance, it's important that we embrace the foundation upon which our city was built. New investment must be met with continued investment in the storied gems that already exist, from our city's historic architecture to its world-class museums and art collections. Through this dual approach, we're preserving our history and celebrating it with those who call Buffalo home, and sharing it with those who visit.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Western New York?**

Supporting and enhancing our cultural institutions is vital to grow, and just as importantly, sustain the economic resurgence we're seeing. We saw a 50% increase in visitors to Canalside this summer – 1.5 million people – and they're once again coming to enjoy the prime feature that our city was originally built around- our waterfront. Soon, construction on the 43,000 square foot Explore and More Children's Museum will be underway, and once finished will bring even more families and visitors to our waterfront, offering social, educational and cultural opportunities to our youngest generation.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Western New York?**

We need to adequately fund our art and cultural institutions that already build upon and celebrate our region's history and identity. A prime example of this is the \$5 million that I worked to secure in funding from the New York State Senate to support the expansion of Buffalo AKG Art Museum. As such, I will continue to be a fierce advocate for historic preservation tax incentives, and work alongside our community leaders to breathe new life into existing neighborhoods so that we can capitalize on opportunities to truly showcase our historic resources.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Western New York?**

Fostering our youth's interest in the arts needs to start at an early age, and by establishing a deep partnership between our schools with our cultural institutions, we can develop and nurture their interest through education and experiences. In order to strengthen our children's understanding of the arts, we must encourage creative thinking and embrace opportunities to teach through participation.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase grant funding for cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts if elected, and why?**

Throughout the years, I've supported many cultural organizations as they pursue New York State Council on the Arts funding, and I will continue to support increasing grant opportunities for arts and cultural organizations in our community.

**Several of the Regional Economic Development Council plans throughout the state include arts and culture as a priority or targeted industry, but the WNY plan only mentions it in the context of tourism. If elected, would you advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in the WNY REDC plan and for a cultural representative to sit on the council, and why?**

Because arts and cultural institutions play a key role in our economy, I believe individuals who represent the industry should have the opportunity to offer their expertise and truly contribute to Western New York as it seeks to utilize and build upon our region's assets.

## **NYS ASSEMBLY, 141ST DISTRICT**

### **ROSS KOSTECKY, Republican**

**Office Sought** Member of Assembly – 141st District

**Current Occupation & Employer** Staff Member, Erie County Legislature

**Please list your top 3 priorities if elected.**

Job creation and grassroots economic development;

Public safety and safe neighborhoods by repealing the SAFE Act;

Pro-ridesharing legislation, support for companies such as Uber and Lyft.

**What is the role of arts and culture in community development and revitalization?**

Arts and culture is one of the defining factors of the Buffalo and the Western New York region. Not only are the arts a keepsake of our history, but a lasting gateway to our future.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Western New York?**

Buffalo and the region are rich with ethnic heritage and diversity, in many ways it's the fabric that brings and helps keep people in the region. Local and state governments need to cut taxes and incentivize businesses to make living and staying here affordable for all.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Western New York?**

Visit Buffalo Niagara, for instance, is doing great work to showcase the entire region and bring in new and returning visitors. From the Buffalo Italian Heritage Festival, to the Polaski Day Parade, Juneteenth Festival, the Western New York Southtowns Scenic Byway, uniting Erie and Cattaraugus Counties, to the world-renowned Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and the endless celebrations throughout the summer, the region is showcased very well. We need to continue to make investments in these types of organizations and events.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Western New York?**

Our arts/entertainment industry and technical trades are a much needed component to a diverse and effective WNY community. Emphasizing hands-on trades in high schools and colleges could be a staple of the curriculum.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase grant funding for cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts if elected, and why?**

Specific funding levels would need to be addressed each fiscal year. For 2016, the 1900+ unique projects funded throughout the state accounted for \$41+ million, Erie County's share was 72 projects accounting for almost \$2 million.

**Several of the Regional Economic Development Council plans throughout the state include arts and culture as a priority or targeted industry, but the WNY plan only mentions it in the context of tourism. If elected, would you advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in the WNY REDC plan and for a cultural representative to sit on the council, and why?**

Given the nature and wide array of the individuals that serve on the Council there's no doubt as to the current body's commitment to arts, culture and broad respect for the preservation of the area's heritage.

## CRYSTAL PEOPLES-STOKES, Democrat, Working Families

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

## NYS ASSEMBLY, 142ND DISTRICT

### MICHAEL KEARNS, Democrat, Republican, Conservative, Independent

**Office Sought** New York State Assemblyman 142nd District

**Current Occupation & Employer** New York State Assembly

**Please list your top 3 priorities if elected.**

1. I am proud my Good Neighbor Legislation was incorporated into the Foreclosure Relief Act of 2016. I will continue to fight the Zombie Crisis in our communities by engaging neighbors, courts, municipalities and banks to increase the likelihood of success.
2. Help find funding for our veterans and bring greater attention to the poor condition of the Veterans Posts throughout Western New York.
3. Lead and inspire the 142nd District to become the healthiest district in NYS with help from local not for profits and others.

#### **What is the role of arts and culture in community development and revitalization?**

I am proud to have been part of the process that will bring CYC to WNY Buffalo-West Seneca has been selected to host the 2017 Gaelic Athletic Association Games. The CYC is an annual weekend tournament of Gaelic football and hurling organized by the GAA. Next year's tournament weekend will bring 3,000 athletes to WNY from 7/26 to 7/31 2017. This will contribute enormously to the continued development and revitalization of the City of Buffalo and the Town of West Seneca. These games will showcase our rich Irish Culture along with the James Joyce Collection hosted by the University of Buffalo.

#### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Western New York?**

From the Botanical Gardens to the Charles E. Birchfield Nature and Arts Center, South Park an Olmstead Park and the Buffum House in South Buffalo, our artistic and historic treasures can help inspire entire neighborhoods and cities in a greater appreciation of the creative spirit which helped shape our city and the creative energies which transform not only our social environments but ourselves spiritually.

#### **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Western New York?**

We need a greater focus and funding on architectural heritage sites like the Buffum



House, the oldest house in South Buffalo which has a history with Native Americans and Red Jacket, plus there must be increased funding of the performing and film arts to attract more productions to the Western new York area.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Western New York?**

Perhaps the best way to foster creative thinking is funding the arts in our schools and funding our libraries to have places to nurture the mind, spirit and soul. To quote J.K. Rowling, "Words are our most inexhaustible source of magic." Fostering an appreciation for words and the creative arts will edify us as individuals in the present and all of us spiritually into the future.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase grant funding for cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts if elected, and why?**

I have and will continue to vote for increases in funding for cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts.

**Several of the Regional Economic Development Council plans throughout the state include arts and culture as a priority or targeted industry, but the WNY plan only mentions it in the context of tourism. If elected, would you advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in the WNY REDC plan and for a cultural representative to sit on the council, and why?**

Yes I will advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in the WNY REDC plan and for a representative to sit on the council because an experienced and expert voice with respect to particular subjects is always welcome in determining the most logical and wise path forward into the future. The arts have played a role in WNY from the Elmwood Arts Festival to cultural museums to Canal-side in bringing people together and improving the quality of life for people living in Western New York and attracting young people and families to the area as a welcoming and exciting place to live.

## **NYS ASSEMBLY, 143RD DISTRICT**

### **RUSSELL SUGG, Republican, Conservative, Independent, Reform**

**Office Sought** 143rd District NYS Assemblymember

**Current Occupation & Employer** Trustee, Real Property Analyst, Appraiser

**Please list your top 3 priorities if elected.**

As Assembly Member, my top three priorities are to address urgent human problems, ethics reform and to fully preserve our Constitutional guarantees.

**What is the role of arts and culture in community development and revitalization?**

I envision the role of arts and culture in community development and revitalization as a necessary opportunity to celebrate the historic, sociological, and cultural heritage of the community and present it as the aesthetically physical, and practical, “soul” of the community.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Western New York?**

I wish there were enough government monies to facilitate the role of arts and culture in community economic development. But, money must be prioritized to adequately address human needs, infrastructure and public safety. The private civic and business sector must necessarily carry the financial burden.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Western New York?**

In order to develop culture and heritage tourism, again, civic organizations and private business need to be highly involved. While government can not fund these efforts to the extent that I would like to see, government can help by stepping out of the regulatory way.

**In what ways would you support young people’s access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Western New York?**

The first thing that needs to happen is to develop interest in you people. That must start with our educational system. In our classrooms, we need to proudly and factually embrace our past in order to confront and build a solid future.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase grant funding for cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts if elected, and why?**

I am sympathetic to the arts and culture, but government must prioritize its spending.

**Several of the Regional Economic Development Council plans throughout the state include arts and culture as a priority or targeted industry, but the WNY plan only mentions it in the context of tourism. If elected, would you advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in the WNY REDC plan and for a cultural representative to sit on the council, and why?**

I would have no problem with a cultural representative sitting in on the WNY REDC provided that the representation is committed to thoughtfully and realistically working with the REDC, and not serve as a consistent obstructionist voice.

**MONICA WALLACE, Democrat, Working Families,  
Women's Equality**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

## **NYS ASSEMBLY, 144TH DISTRICT**

**MICHAEL NORRIS, Republican, Independent**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

## **NYS ASSEMBLY, 145TH DISTRICT**

**JOHN CERETTO, Democrat, Working Families,  
Independent**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

**ANGELO MORINELLO, Republican, Conservative,  
Independent, Reform**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

## **NYS ASSEMBLY, 146TH DISTRICT**

**WILLIAM KRACKER, Working Families**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

**DOUGLAS LIPPERT, Conservative**

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

# STEVEN MEYER, Democrat, Working Families, Women's Equality

**Office Sought** NYS Assembly District 146

**Current Occupation & Employer** Small business owner – Homegrown Community Solutions, & the Executive Director of ECDC

**Please list your top 3 priorities if elected.**

1. Reforming our campaign finance system
2. Ending corporate welfare by reforming our tax code to close loopholes
3. Increase funding for public education & address the student debt crisis

## **What is the role of arts and culture in community development and revitalization?**

I believe that arts and culture directly affect the prosperity of a community. We must invest time and resources into local arts and culture as such programs bring communities together. Local arts programs are proven to have drastic impacts on local crime rates, property values, graduation & literacy rates, and more. Investing in arts & culture allows us to come together as a community and improve our neighborhoods.

## **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Western New York?**

I believe that arts and culture programs create incentives for local economic development. When a community comes together through art and cultural expression, it always leads to local economic development and the prosperity of local businesses over corporate big box stores. In particular, public art in the form of sculptures, murals, or streetscaping efforts has been proven to increase foot traffic to business corridors. I believe it is time that we recognize this impact and invest in local art programs as a method of spurring economic development.

## **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Western New York?**

I would work to always make sure we do not balance our budget by cutting funding to local arts and culture programs. As a member of the Assembly, I would also make sure to develop strong relationships with local stakeholders in the arts & culture community to ensure that a prosperous partnership exists between local representation and the arts & culture arena. I also believe that investing in tourism programs to highlight our rich history and cultural heritage can prove successful for our local economy, and prove successful for our neighborhoods and business as well.

## **In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Western New York?**

I myself am very lucky to have grown up with incredible access to arts & culture programs, and I want to make sure that children everywhere have easy & affordable access to these programs as well, regardless of their zip code or ethnic background. Arts programs are particularly important for youth as they teach important interpersonal

relationship skills to help them build friendships and partnerships throughout life. If we do not invest in these programs, our future workforce and population will be lacking important societal tools necessary to further their own professional & personal lives.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase grant funding for cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts if elected, and why?**

I would absolutely vote to increase grant funding for cultural organizations through the New York State Council on the Arts. I recognize how important this funding is to the future of our neighborhoods, communities, economy, and workforce. I know that investing in grant funding for cultural organizations will pay off exponentially, and I think that historically, these programs have been unfairly underfunded.

**Several of the Regional Economic Development Council plans throughout the state include arts and culture as a priority or targeted industry, but the WNY plan only mentions it in the context of tourism. If elected, would you advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in the WNY REDC plan and for a cultural representative to sit on the council, and why?**

I would absolutely advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in the WNY REDC plan, and for a cultural representative to sit on the council, because I think it is time that we see an investment in arts & culture as an investment in economic development. Unfortunately, many politicians do not recognize the societal and economic importance of these programs, and they often think that the decisions can be made without a strong presence from the arts & culture community itself. I disagree with that sentiment and strongly support more input from the arts & culture community.

## RACHEL OBENAUER, Independent

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

## DOROTHY SOBCZYK, Green Party

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

## RAYMOND WALTER, Republican, Conservative, Independent, Reform

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

## NYS ASSEMBLY, 147TH DISTRICT

DAVID DIPIETRO, Republican, Conservative,  
Independent, Reform

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

## NYS ASSEMBLY, 148TH DISTRICT

JOSEPH GIGLIO, Republican, Conservative,  
Independent, Reform

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.

## NYS ASSEMBLY, 149TH DISTRICT

ARNOLD KACALSKI, Republican

Candidate chose not to respond to survey.