



# **Michael Brennan for Congress**

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## **Building Maine's Creative Economy**

*"As a legislator in both the Maine House and Senate, I consistently endorsed the efforts of public agencies and nonprofit cultural organizations to build support for artistic and cultural activity in Maine. I did this because I believe that one critical measure of community wellbeing is the extent to which cultural programs and activities are alive, active, and well. Unfortunately, despite the significance of these programs and activities in building community and supporting Maine's vital tourism industry, state support for arts and culture in Maine remained extremely limited until the late 1990s.."*

Eventually, a consortium of major arts and culture organizations - the [Maine State Cultural Affairs Council](#) – was formed to address the legislature and the public at large on the need for ongoing state level support. The Council includes the Maine Arts Commission, the Maine Humanities Council, the Maine State Library, the Maine State Museum, the Maine State Archive, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the Maine Historical Society.

I enthusiastically endorsed a \$3.2 million appropriation for the 1999-2000 biennium for what became known as the Council's "[New Century Community Program](#)" and I continued to support the financing of the Council's programs through the balance of my service in the legislature. I fully intend to pursue opportunities to enhance and expand Federal support for arts and culture as your Congressman.

My attention and commitment to Federal support for the arts will help bolster Maine's growth. Currently, forty percent of Federal funding for arts and culture already goes directly to the states, and increased appropriations for Federal support face Congress even as we speak. Without that support, much of the activity we already enjoy and take for granted would either vanish or be severely curtailed.

Luckily, the Cultural Affairs Council's 'New Century Program' has proactively responded to potential changes; the council – in an approach unique to Maine – promises to utilize the artistic and cultural resources of our state to support the development of a 'Creative Economy'.

In May 2005, Governor Baldacci established what is now known as Maine's 'Creative Economy Council' to provide "advice, support and assistance in the creation" and implementation of public and private creative economic activities. This creative economy strategy is now underway in Maine, and it promises to play a significant role in improving the economic and social well being of every Maine citizen.

When I use the term 'creative economy,' I'm not just discussing arts and culture, although these are instrumental in building a creative economy. Rather, a 'creative economy' is one in which the whole gamut of creative workers — architects, computer software designers, film editors, writers and musicians — play major roles in stimulating social and economic development. What binds these professions and individuals together is that they make their livings by 'thinking creatively'.

When you combine all of these creative jobs, you find that Maine's creative work force is growing faster than the state's overall workforce. Moreover, they are making essential contributions in helping Maine's economy move from primarily low-price manufacturing industries to higher value/higher return activities such as aquaculture, fine furniture, boatbuilding, and graphic design.

Our economic future depends on sustaining and expanding tourism while simultaneously developing and expanding new high value business and marketing strategies toward that end.

As your Congressman, I plan to direct Federal resources toward the development of Maine's creative economy in general and Maine's arts and culture sector in particular. A major study conducted by the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center at the University of Maine in 2005 specifically recommends that major efforts be taken to double Maine's arts and culture sector by 2020 while concurrently investing in new and established initiatives to help industries create and implement high value businesses and innovative marketing strategies.

Federal agencies that can and already do support such initiatives include the Department of the Interior, the Department of Education, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, not to mention the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities. These recommendations build and expand upon earlier findings developed

in July 2004 by the Maine Center for Business and Economic Development, the New England Environmental Finance Center, and the University of Southern Maine.

Expanding Federal activities in support of the arts and culture will improve the education our children receive in public schools, increase the range and character of Maine's artistic and cultural activities and programs, build Maine's physical and economic infrastructure, trigger new investments in high value/high return business activity, and stimulate Maine tourism. The funding, supporting and understanding of cultural and artistic interests is essential in a competitive and prosperous Maine.