

Q1

Candidate Information

- Candidate Name: Joseph Couch
- Legislative District: 21
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Q2

Are you aware of an agency of state government – the Nebraska Arts Council (NAC) – whose mission is to support the arts, humanities and creative activities in Nebraska?

- Somewhat aware

Q3

The Nebraska Arts Council invested \$1.5 million in FY2019-20 state general appropriations in grants across the state to support arts programs and access, arts education programs, and supporting local arts councils and organizations. Most grant dollars required a 1:1 match. With which statement do you most agree?

- The NAC should receive the same amount of state funding in the coming fiscal year.

Comments:

- I believe all kinds of art are incredibly important. The coming fiscal years will likely have some bitter budget fights as we deal with the economic fallout of the pandemic, our unbalanced tax stream, and climate change. None of that should be at the expense of the arts.

Q4

Research has shown that arts education increases achievement across all academic disciplines, enhances student engagement, and fosters development of critical thinking and learning skills. How important do you think it is to have access and participation in arts education for youth in Nebraska schools?

- Extremely important

Comments:

- I made a linoleum cut the other day, something I hadn't done since middle school. Learning about different art forms may have made me smarter and more productive. But more importantly, it's made me happier and given me the opportunity to pursue different hobbies.

Q5

The State of Nebraska has curriculum standards in the fine arts, which includes art, music, theater, dance, and media arts. How important do you think it is for schools to have content-specific certified teachers in the arts?

- Essential

Comments:

- While it can be fun to have your band teacher and your choir teacher be the same person, that takes a toll. Overlap in the arts doesn't mean overlap in expertise. It certainly doesn't mean art teachers should do four jobs at the price of one.

Q6

According to data from the Creative Economy State Profiles, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that arts and cultural production accounts for \$2,943,343,023 and 2.4% of the Nebraska economy, contributing 28,735 jobs. The Nebraska Blueprint report recommends investing in “community vibrancy” projects to attract businesses and workers, increase tourism, and generate revenue for state and local government. How important do you feel state appropriations and policies to advance Nebraska’s creative industries (an example is this year’s LB943) are in relation to creating a strong economic future for Nebraska?

- Extremely important

Comments:

- Part of solving the brain-drain issue our state is facing is making our state a place people want to live, not just be alive.

Q7

In 1998, the Nebraska Legislature established the Cultural Preservation Endowment Fund to join the Nebraska Cultural Endowment to create a private-public partnership for providing stable funding for arts and cultural programs in the state. These funds must be matched dollar-for-dollar by private contributions. The earnings from both the state and private sides are then distributed to the Nebraska Arts Council and Humanities Nebraska to fund grants and programs all across the state. As a candidate for the Nebraska Legislature, what is your position in supporting this investment in Nebraska’s rich arts and humanities assets?

- Strongly Support

Q8

Nebraska adults have one of the highest the highest participation rate in the U.S. in annually attending an art exhibit or arts performance. Is there a specific arts or culture organization in your part of the state that you or your family particularly enjoy, or do you have an artistic talent or hobby?

- Yes

If yes, please list your talent/hobby and your favorite organization(s) here.:

- I've been learning to cut and solder glass recently. I also play several musical instruments poorly. I sang, danced, and played in the band in high school. The cost of tickets means I only go to shows every once in a while, but I also visit the free museums on occasion.

Q9

We welcome any additional comments or experiences you would like to make with regards to the arts in Nebraska. Please use the space below. Your comments will be posted on the Nebraskans for the Arts website and in a voter guide of survey results received, sent to the network of arts advocates in the participating organizations.

- It stifles creativity in our youth when they think it's impossible to live as an artist. Especially for poor children who might not have the same opportunities. I got a degree in Mathematics because I'm good at it, but as a child, I wanted to dance or become an astronaut, both of which seemed impossible. I want a Nebraska that raises children who actually can do anything they want. Economic justice and the arts are both essential to helping people believe.