

Aug. 1, 2019

Contact: Jeff Morgan, 515-281-3858,
jeff.morgan@iowa.gov

Iowa Arts Forum invites candidates and Iowans to focus on arts policy

Ben Folds headlines arts-advocacy event in Des Moines

It's showtime for a national discussion on the arts at the Iowa Arts Forum on Aug. 15 at Hoyt Sherman Place in Des Moines.

Popular singer-songwriter Ben Folds will join national and state arts groups who have invited all the presidential candidates to discuss the important role the arts play in the cultural, economic, educational and social well-being of communities across the United States. Folds plans to interview the candidates onstage about their plans to advance arts policy.

The event is also an opportunity to help Iowans advocate for the arts during the run-up to the Iowa Caucuses.

"If the arts community wants to move the needle on future support of the arts, then we need to act now to engage candidates on these issues," said Folds, who chairs ArtsVote 2020, a program of the Americans for the Arts Action Fund.

Folds has invited all the presidential candidates to his [ArtsVote 2020 podcast](#) and has interviewed five so far.

The Iowa Arts Forum, which will be streamed via Facebook Live [@IowaArtsCouncil](#), is presented by Americans for the Arts and its Arts Action Fund, as well as the Iowa Alliance for Arts Education, Iowa Cultural Coalition and Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs.

Together, these groups want Iowans to help candidates understand how the arts can offer solutions to an array of challenges, from health care to education to immigration.

To help, Americans for the Arts has developed an online tool called the [Arts and Social Impact Explorer](#), which shows how the arts can benefit a host of other difficult issues. Art therapy, for example, helps military veterans readjust to civilian life. Arts education inspires students to think creatively.

The arts also help drive the economy. In Iowa, more than 5,000 arts-related businesses employ 25,000 workers statewide, according to a fact sheet about "[Why the Arts Matter in Iowa](#)," from the

Americans for the Arts Action Fund.

The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that Iowa's arts and culture sector contributes \$3.8 billion to the state's economy and represents about 2 percent of the state's GDP. Nationwide, the arts and culture sector is a \$764 billion industry and accounts for 4.2 percent of the GDP.

Arts advocates hope to highlight these facts and figures during the current presidential campaign, while the national media spotlights shine on Iowa.

"The arts have inherent value, of course, but they also have an enormous impact on other areas," said Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts and the Arts Action Fund. "Even in the earliest democracies, going back to the Greeks, the arts have always been part of the process of dealing with issues, changing attitudes, introducing new ideas and healing in the aftermath of conflict."

Arts advocates hosted a similar arts forum in Iowa in 2015, along with other events at the major-party national conventions in 2016, 2012 and 2008.

"It's especially important to hold events like this in Iowa, where voters have access to the candidates and can elevate the arts to the national conversation," said Tom Smull, president of the Iowa Cultural Coalition.

After this year's forum, Folds will join the Violent Femmes for a concert at 6 p.m. at the new amphitheater at Water Works Park in Des Moines.

Iowa Arts Forum with Ben Folds When: 1-5 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 15 Where: Hoyt Sherman Place, 1501 Woodland Ave., Des Moines Admission: Free Online registration: iowaculture.gov

Iowa Arts Forum: A Community Conversation A locally focused event with state and national arts leaders is scheduled in southwest Iowa. When: 2:30-4:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 14 Where: Clarinda Carnegie Art Museum, 300 N. 16th St., Clarinda Admission: Free Online registration: iowaculture.gov

###

