

## Murphy in Torrington to Support Arts Community

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TORRINGTON, CT – Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) was joined by leaders of arts-related businesses and local arts supporters to discuss the need to renew the federal government's commitment to the arts. Murphy held two meetings and a press conference on the topic at the historic Warner Theatre on Main Street in Torrington. Federal funding for the arts has been cut by 48% from 1992 to 2006, adjusted for inflation. This year, Democrats in Congress will attempt reverse that trend.

"The arts are vital to the economy and the character of Litchfield County. We are so fortunate to have the historic Warner Theatre, the Sharon Playhouse, the Nutmeg Ballet, and so much enthusiasm from communities here in the northwest corner. I'm going to make it my mission to fight at the federal level to ensure that there is support for continuing this legacy," said Murphy, who recently joined the Congressional Arts Caucus.

Connecticut is home to 8,800 arts-related businesses that employ 41,430 people. The 5th Congressional District is home to 1,693 arts-related businesses that employ 7,331 people. These arts-centric businesses play an important role in building and sustaining economic vibrancy. They employ people, spend money locally, generate government revenue, and are a cornerstone of tourism and economic development.

Forty percent of the National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) program dollars is granted to state arts agencies. These grants, combined with state legislative appropriations and other dollars, are distributed widely to strengthen states' arts infrastructures and ensure broad access to the arts. The NEA awarded 1,724 grants last year to nonprofit arts organizations for projects that encourage artistic creativity and that bring the arts to millions of Americans. An increase in funding for the NEA will benefit Litchfield County.

Alice Bemand, Executive Director of TriArts Sharon Playhouse, joined Murphy at the events, and said, "You just can't overstate the impact of the arts to the community--socially, culturally, economically, and educationally. On a personal level, I have seen how my own son, who is not a traditional learner, tasted success through the TriArts Young Playwrights contest. On a broader scale, TriArts touches a wide region with its unique formula of combining community actors, singers and dancers of all ages with professionals, providing onstage opportunities for over 100 people every year. More than 14,000 come to enjoy our summer season, which in turn increases tourism in the area. Additional funding would allow us to expand our Youththeatre program and increase the number of scholarships we can offer. Thanks to our donor base, sponsors and grants we can offer high quality local theatre at affordable prices."

A renewed commitment to the arts will benefit students as well. Students who take regular arts courses are shown to score on average 90 to 100 points better on their SATs. Studies have shown that students who are involved in the arts have better attendance at school, earn better grades, have lower drop-out rates, perform more community service, watch fewer hours of television, and have higher self-esteem. At-risk teens who participate in arts programs are half as likely to repeat their crimes.