

1. Please complete the following general information. Thank you.

Candidate's Name: - Lizbeth Benacquisto

Candidate's Web site: - <http://www.votelizbeth.com>

2. Please check the office below that you're running for in 2010:

Florida Senate

3. If you're running for either the Florida Senate or House of Representatives, please indicate the district below:

Senate District 27

4. Background: According to Dun & Bradstreet January 2010 data, there are over 47,564 arts-related businesses in Florida that employ over 184,436 people. In 2008, Florida's arts and culture not-for-profit industry generated over \$3.1 billion in local economic activity and delivered more than \$446.5 million in local and state government revenue. The arts and cultural industry is even recognized as critical to Florida's economic development in Enterprise Florida's Roadmap to Florida's Future 2010-2015 Strategic Plan for Economic Development. Statement: State appropriations and policies to advance Florida's creative industries (including arts, cultural, historical, humanities, science, and arts education resources) are extremely important to Florida's strong economic and innovative future.

I strongly agree.

5. Background: In the last three years, Florida's funding for its arts and cultural resources has been reduced from \$34.7 million in FY 2006-2007 to \$950,000 for FY 2010-2011. Florida now ranks 49th in per capita funding in state appropriations for its investment in arts and cultural resources, only 5 cents per Floridian. These drastic state cuts weaken the infrastructure that sustains this critically important industry, an industry vital to our state's overall economic and qualitative well being. Statement: Restoring state investments in Florida's vibrant arts and cultural resources produce significant returns. Increases not only to restore but also to advance funding for the arts and culture is essential to sustain Florida's creative industries' impact on economic development, jobs, tourism, downtown revitalization, health and wellness, student achievement, crime prevention, and quality of life.

I strongly agree.

6. Background: State and national research indicates that arts education is critical to help prepare students for a future workforce that will depend upon creativity and innovation. The Florida Department of Education recently completed research that demonstrates (1) For the general population, the more music and arts classes taken, the higher the student achievement in all measures; (2) For students on "free and reduced lunch," an indicator of socioeconomic levels, the more music and arts classes taken, the higher the student

achievement in all measures; (3) For students divided by ethnicity, the more music and arts classes taken, the higher the student achievement in all measures; (4)The more arts classes taken, the less likely a student is to dropout of school. Statement: Local, state, and federal policy makers must work collectively and collaboratively to provide adequate funding and policy support to ensure that all our students can study one or more of the fine arts (music, dance, theater, and art) taught by certified fine arts teachers as a requirement of their graduation.

I strongly agree.

7. Please share with us below your thoughts about and experiences with arts and cultural resources -- thank you so much:

I hope I have earned your support, and ask for your vote. Together, we can jumpstart our economy and get Florida back on the right track. I'm a mother who's been actively involved in my children's school activities, and have witnessed my children and their classmates flourish through investments that we provide in collaborative fine arts programs. I have served as a local elected official in government in which we invested in arts and cultural resources. And I've worked as a community activist involved in neighborhood projects to bring arts and cultural resources to at-risk neighborhoods. So my experience and vision are in line with your mission, and I can hit the ground running in Tallahassee as a partner to you and your like-minded advocates. As your next Senator I will take my vision for improving the educational, cultural, historical and artistic opportunities of our community to the next level. I look forward to working with you in the state legislature! Thank you.