

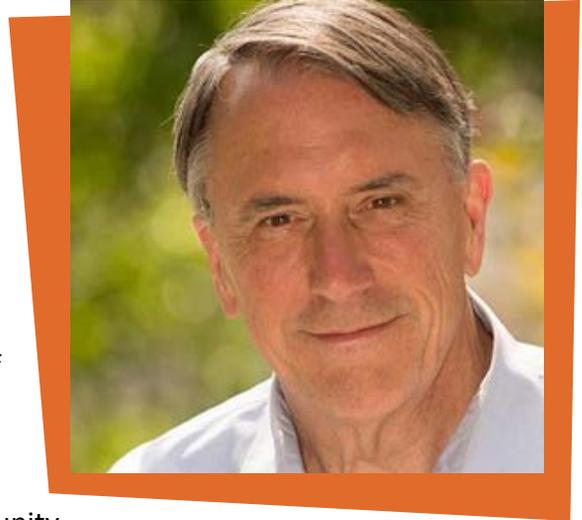
Peter Galbraith, Democrat

Interview: July 26, 2016

1. Addressing Statewide Issues

Like many other states, Vermont faces many economic and social issues. We also know that 85% of Vermonters agree that arts and culture are vital to their community's life.

- Can you provide examples on how you would integrate the arts, culture, and creative community in solving social problems (or in enhancing opportunities for greater social or civic engagement)?
- How would you use the creative sector to drive economic development across the state?



Peter Galbraith: Well, perhaps a word of background. In 1958, my father wrote a book called “The Affluent Society,” which challenged the conventional wisdom. That was a phrase that he actually invented. The conventional wisdom was that our well-being is measured simply by GNP: by how much we produce, of goods and services. He argued for other values as well and notably, protecting the environment and the arts.

This has been part of the Galbraith family philosophy my entire life, or almost my entire life. It seems to me that the arts are an integral part of our life. Culture is everything. You walk down State Street and you come to this building and you have around it, a little sculpture garden with flowers. Art is something that belongs in public spaces. It's something that is very appropriate with museums and places that people can visit and in public buildings.

Theatrical performances are also part of the fabric of community. To me, it's just integral to all aspects of life and not just here in Vermont.

Well, what you get from candidates are elaborate promises to bring in livable wage jobs and to promote full employment, and I'm sure there are wonderful commitments made on the arts as well. I've been through now, I think, 23 Vermont elections. I can't help but observe that if all of that was easy, it would have happened by now. What goes on in the arts is largely autonomous. It is what artists produce, it's what communities support.

I think of Brattleboro, my own area, which is a very creative place. Beyond the rather limited support that the state of Vermont gives to Vermont Arts Council and the Vermont Humanities Council, the impact is ... Most of what happens with the creative community is what they do themselves. Again, I'm in favor of appropriate public support, but I'm not going to say that ...

I'm not promising to create a ministry of culture or department of culture or an agency of culture.

2. Personal Connection

We've all had defining moments in our lives, where a cultural experience (a performance you have attended, or a work of art you have seen in person, etc.) has made a lasting impact on your personal or professional life.

- What personal experience with arts, culture, or creativity has had an impact on your life and your view of Vermont? How has that impact changed you?

Peter Galbraith: Well, I've been a diplomat and so, so much of my experience is international, and so it's a little hard for me to pick out a single, defining moment. For sure, what has affected me the most has been paintings and I suppose ... Actually, to be fair about it, probably the thing that was most profound was taking Fine Arts 13 in college which, in the year I took it, was simply European painting from 1500 to 1900; having black and white photographs in the books of works of art to look at and memorize. Then setting off to Europe with those books and making a point of trying to see every single one.

Now, 45 years later, I'm close to having succeeded at that. I love art, I love theater; I think of extraordinary performances that I've attended, and again, the great museums of which I am a patron and supporter. They are shape-defining experiences. When I go someplace, I want to see the arts. Of course, the other part of my career is seeing the destruction of the arts.

I went into Dubrovnik in December of 1991, days after the heaviest shelling of the city. It was surrounded by Yugoslav military. They had to arrange a local cease-fire so that I could cross state lines actually on a boat from where the Serbs were to where the Croatians held the city. Some of the historic buildings were still burning. The statues were damaged from where the shells had landed.

Some of the fountains were broken, and that wasn't just there. In eastern Slovenia, they searched systematically, dynamited the Catholic churches in Banja Luka. I went in '92 to the Ferhat Pasha mosque, one of the great ... Probably, in many ways, the most artistically important Ottoman mosque in the Balkans. Then 1994, it was blown up. The next time I was there in '95, it was just a parking lot. They not only blew it up but carted away all the pieces so it couldn't be rebuilt.

I crossed the Mostar Bridge when it was actually ... Had tires on it to try to protect it, and then watched this on Croatian television. So it's been shelled and destroyed, and I then testified in the war crimes against the people who destroyed it. I've been to, I think, all the places in Iraq and Syria, the major artistic sites that have been destroyed by the Islamic State, Nimrud and Nineveh, Petra, Palmyra. Palmyra is less destroyed than the other. Mosul was obliterated.

To me, art is at the heart of our civilization now. Art experiences in Vermont, well, we aren't at that level. A couple of my closest friends are Wolf Kahn and Emily Mason. I've spent a lot of time with them. I admire the work that both of them do. One of the things actually that I'd like to do ... Because Wolf is very, very prolific and has a warehouse full of art. If I'm governor, I'd like to see if there's a way that we could have some kind of museum that would display some of his art, and some of Emily's but again, she's less prolific. Wolf just has a huge surplus.

3. Arts Education and Programs for our Youth

Art instruction increases achievement across all academic disciplines and develops the whole child. We also know that 94% of Vermonters agree that the arts should be integrated into K-12 public school education.

- What will you do as Governor to champion arts education with our youth both in our schools and in our communities?
- How will you balance the importance of arts education with the push for primarily technical education (STEM)?

Peter Galbraith: First, I don't buy the idea that emphasizing STEM is going to better equip young Vermonters for life. I think that, first, some of it is way overstated because there are, in fact, no jobs out there going begging for so called STEM positions. In some of these fields, there's a significant oversupply. The whole premise was based on a catchy phrase and it was inadequately researched, particularly in the Vermont context.

Secondly, I believe what prepares people well for life is a well-rounded education which absolutely includes, in an integral way, the arts, music, drama as well as literature and humanities. There are really two aspects to it. First is to encourage kids to explore their creative potential, whether it's drawing, painting, singing, playing a musical instrument, or acting in a play.

Those things change a person. Being in a play builds self-confidence and public speaking — even if you aren't going to be a politician. It is a really important part of life to have some confidence in your ability to be able to draw something that resembles something, or to express yourself creatively and have some balance and color. I mean all of that. ... Or to be able to play a musical instrument (about which I have zero ability).

For some kids, this will be a lifetime passion for them. For others, it will be something they'll enjoy and for others, they'll try it and never touch it again. Fine, but I can guarantee it. I have a teenage son and he's struggling with his math. I couldn't tell you what trigonometry is. I know I studied it but I actually don't really know what it is. I wonder about the emphasis on calculus. Again, I couldn't quite explain it.

The emphasis on technical skills for people who are not going in that career track, to me, seems to have very little or no value. In truth, even somebody going into a technical field, having the exposure to culture, to being able to express yourself, is going to be much more pertinent. It's

part of our common fabric and I would also say that it ought to include not just expression but teaching about the art.

To me, the history of art, the painting, sculpture, is as important as literature and yet, it's not really taught in the school system or it's taught in a very limited way.

For kids, it makes a huge difference. I took my son to Rome when he was, I don't know, 11 and he had studied Greek mythology. We went through ... He could tell the tale of every sculpture we saw. Then we went into the Vatican museum and he just absolutely did not want to see religious paintings. Then he began to look at them and spot pagan details in these medieval Christian paintings.

It changed his outlook and this is a kid who, now that he's 15, will spend 10 hours in a museum in a day. It's just amazing. I will do that too, but I'm older. It's not just common for teenagers.

And I want to emphasize, I consider it to be of equal importance as STEM education and for most kids, young people, in terms of their lives, of greater long term value. I don't want to be equivocal about that at all.

4. The New Administration's Role in the Creative Community

The State allocates funding each year for the Vermont Arts Council, the Vermont Humanities Council, and others that serve Vermont's creative community. Some are concerned that the state's capacity to support the programs and activities that are vital to the community are insufficient.

- If you share this concern, please share your ideas on how you might address them. For example, what three revenue sources will you create or use to increase the state's financial investment in the creative community? What specific program priorities related to the creative community are you particularly interested in investing in?
- If you don't share this concern, please let us know what you believe is the path forward for the creative community. What specifically should the state be investing in to ensure the vitality of Vermont's creative sector?

Peter Galbraith: I'm supportive of public funding of the arts and of the humanities. I might add that I'm a regular participant in the Vermont Humanities Council and the First Wednesday series. I'm certainly committed to maintaining the current level of support. It is pretty minimal compared to the value, so I would like to see robust support but of course, I have to do it in the context of other priorities.

The arts are incredibly important. It doesn't mean that the state's role in the arts is going to be incredibly important. Look, the state of Vermont has limited resources and it has a finite mission. Much of the mission is education, healthcare, roads; public safety. All of those are the fundamental public services, which, incidentally of course, support the creative community as they do other communities.

To talk about the central role of the arts and public education, that's very easy for me because public education is a function. Can the state play ... And should the state play a small additional role in support of the arts and the humanities in the state? Yes. How much? I mean there are simply other competing needs...

5. A Cultural Destination

While Vermont is characterized as a special place, many believe the state has yet to effectively leverage the strength of our arts, culture, and creative community as a means for branding and attracting residents, employees, and visitors.

- How would you utilize our state's cultural assets to make Vermont a place where people want to live, work, play, and visit?

Peter Galbraith: The top priority for Vermont is to make it a place where people want to live. I'm strongly supportive of tourism but I'm really concerned about the quality of life for people who live here, for Vermonters. That, obviously, includes quality schools and for tertiary education.

It's one reason that I've proposed that we provide four years' free tuition at all Vermont state colleges as well as reduced tuition at UVM which would cost \$28 million paid for by repealing \$28.5 million in special interest tax breaks. There's additional money that comes raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, which is another part of my agenda. In terms of the arts, again, I think art should be part of public institutions.

Now, when you open a bill ... I think it's the federal law which my mentor and former boss, I think, mandated, is that something like 1% of the funding for any new public construction should be for art. I think that is a good approach in the state.

The point is that public buildings should be well designed and art should be part of them. Then in terms of leveraging our specific assets, well, there are a lot of them. Again, I have to say most of them are self-promoting. The Weston Playhouse is a terrific institution and a really beautiful town. It's one I know well because it's near me.

The Vermont Symphony Orchestra, particularly that summer tour and the concert they do in Grafton on July 3rd. That's an important cultural institution. Museums are a little trickier because you need to be able to keep them open and you need to have a certain number of visitors. That's something I would look at and want to explore. I do think the state should be taking a role in promoting the arts and culture of Vermont because it is part of the Vermont experience.

Windham County's Marlboro Music Festival, the Bennington Art Museum, all of these are very important institutions that we should be supporting, recognizing that in all these cases, that the state can provide an additional boost. Fundamentally, these are privately funded; privately

promoted but it is part of the overall Vermont experience. We see the same thing out in Tanglewood (in Massachusetts).

These kinds of festivals, Tanglewood, Marlboro, Weston Playhouse, Bennington Art Museum, they are destinations and it really is something. Maybe it's something to be also worked out in conjunction with some of our neighbors, with southern Vermont with what's going on in western Massachusetts. Here in Northern Vermont, with what's going on in Montreal, Canada, we could do the same.

6. Priorities

The start of a Governor's term often sets the administration's tone and priorities.

- When elected, what actions will you take in your first 100 days to provide support and resources to the creative community?

Peter Galbraith: I will involve the creative community in my inauguration and the ceremonies that go around it, so that will involve advertising and promotion. I think it's fair to say throughout my term in my office, I will be a participant; participating, attending, cheering on artistic events partly because I enjoy doing them anyhow. In terms of my hundred days, my legislative focus is going to be on a handful of key priorities that will really change the state of Vermont.

I'll tell you what they are. They are immediately going to a \$12.50 cents minimum wage and to \$15 by 2021 so that it can support the anti-poverty program we could have in the state. It will make Vermont affordable for those for whom it is now least affordable. It will boost the local economy and it will save taxpayers up to \$80 million ... Because people make so much that they won't get the income tax put in. That's priority one.

Number two, I want to move forward with four years' free tuition at the Vermont state colleges. I've identified the special interest tax breaks that will pay for it. I'll be promoting that.

Number three, I want to move forward with universal, publicly financed primary care. That is to say primary care with no insurance, no premiums, no co-pays, no deductibles, financed by 2% payroll tax. The cost of doing this is about \$220 million. The revenue it would raise would be about \$240 million. It means better outcomes for everyone.

It affects everybody. Every Vermonter would have its better outcomes. If you have an issue, cost is a deterrent from seeing your doctor. There's no cost deterrent, you go and see the doctor and early treatment, again, leads to better results and it saves the system money. Better to excise that mole right after it has changed shape than to treat melanoma. That is my third priority.

Fourth priority is to clean up our politics and eliminate corporate campaign contributions. The fifth priority is to protect Vermont's ridge lines from the extraordinary, environmentally very destructive practice of blowing them up for industrial wind (development).

Those are going to be my priorities. That will be my focus and I'm going to focus on these things in a laser-like way.