

AMERICA NEEDS

YOU!

**Profile of Creative
Elected Officials**

WHY YOU SHOULD
BECOME A
CREATIVITY CHAMPION

ARE YOU A

**photographer. artist. designer. dancer.
scientist. educator. writer. computer
programmer. researcher. painter.
performer. product developer. gardener.
educational trainer. film maker. set
designer. fashion designer. artistic
director. choreographer. gallery owner.
producer. actor. singer.**

poet. dee jay.

**cook. small business owner. entrepreneur.
inventor.**

**cultural worker. community based artist.
muralist. graf artist. hip hop maker.**

**animator. architect. union organizer.
community organizer. social worker.
change agent. nonprofit manager.**

**environmental activist. social justice
worker. progressive activist.**

publisher. soft ware designer.

DO YOU LOVE TO
sing. write. create. perform. dance.
design. paint. make stuff.
garden. invent. build.
collaborate. explore. ask questions.
cook. do magic tricks.
organize people to improve things.
work with wood.
teach. research. learn.
solve problems. make up jokes.
produce art. produce events.
play with software. hack technology.
Ask funny questions.
Disobey.
Wonder why.
Seek justice.

THEN

AMERICA NEEDS YOU!

**To RUN FOR LOCAL OFFICE
AS A CREATIVITY CHAMPION.**



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CALLING ALL ARTISTS AND CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS – WE NEED YOU TO RUN FOR LOCAL OFFICE AS CREATIVITY CHAMPIONS!

Who's Serving Now?

There is a huge opportunity for creative professionals to bring their message of the importance of creativity in society to the electorate. There are virtually no artists and creative professionals serving at local level (the number is not zero, but so small as to be statistically insignificant).

In 2004 there were **7,382 elected state representatives (State Representatives, State Senators)**.

Men held 77.5% of these elected offices and women held 23%. In 2000 women made up 51% of the U.S. population.

The average age of the elected state rep was 54 (the median U.S. age was 36). Whites made up 77%, African-Americans were 8% and Latinos were 4% of elected state representatives.

What did these representatives do before they were elected? The same question, for most of them, could also be phrased – what are they doing now, while they serve? Most of the elected positions at the local level are part-time, allowing people to keep their regular jobs.

Here is the occupational background, where the reps report what they do besides being a representative, since only a few states require reps to be full-time positions:

Attorneys	17%
Full-time legislators (PA, CA, NY, MA, IL?)	15
Business owners	13
Agriculture	7
Retired	8
Business managers/executives	5
Educators/teachers/principals	5
Business/non-managers	4
Professionals/consultants	4
Real estate	4
Insurance	3
Medical field	2
College educators	2
Local government employees	2
Broadcasters (anchor people)	1.5
Homemakers	1

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures.

So roughly 6.5% (Educators, Broadcasters) might be said to have a creative professional background. Bump that up to 10.5% if you include the college educators and medical field.

Zero percent of our state representatives and state senators come from the arts professions.

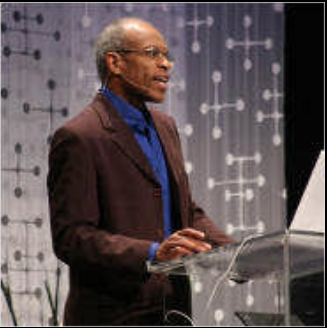


Information on the background of people elected to city councils is a bit less detailed. According to the National League of Cities, in 2001 Whites made up 87% of elected city councils, African-Americans were 8% and Latinos were 3%. 13.3% were under 40 years of age and 31% were over 60 years of age.

I can find no comparable data for county elected officials. The National School Boards Association has some sketchy data on the people who govern America's 14,890 school systems. Their 2002 research reports school



board members were 85.5% white, 7.8% African-American and 3.8% Latino. Overall, the boards were 61.1% male. 93% of these boards were entirely elected positions.

Women are vastly underrepresented in the federal and state judiciaries. Women hold 18% of the seats on the U.S. Court of Appeals, 17% of the seats on the U.S. District Court, 28% of the seats on the States Supreme Courts.

It is safe to say that the field in local elections is wide open for creativity champions to introduce themselves and compete.



	<p>Maurice Cox, Mayor Designing a Better City from the Ground Up</p> 
<p>Creative background</p> <p><i>Creative Elected Official Profile #1</i></p>	<p>Maurice Cox is an architectural educator, urban designer and City Counselor for the City of Charlottesville. Since arriving at the University of Virginia in 1993 as an Assistant Professor of Architecture, he has coordinated the required undergraduate introductory design studio and has taught various graduate seminars focusing on community-based, collaborative processes of urban place making. In 1996 he co-founded the architectural practice of RBGC Architecture, Research and Urbanism. Civic activism and community service characterize all aspects of his teaching, professional practice and academic scholarship, and he is widely known as an advocate for citizen participation in the important planning decisions that affect a community's life.. He serves on the Charlottesville Housing and Redevelopment Authority as a transportation representative to the Metropolitan Planning Organization.</p>  <p><i>First Baptist Church design by Mr. Cox</i></p>
<p>First elected</p>	<p>Charlottesville City Council in 1996, re-elected in 2000. Served as Mayor for two years.</p>
<p>Why did you run?</p>	<p>"I was a area resident for three years and had become a neighborhood activist around issues like highways through parks and unchecked development. I tried to use normal venues to have a voice and I found myself often rebuffed. So I decided to become a public voice after working so hard without success from the outside."</p>
<p>Cost of election</p>	<p>First race was part of a city-wide ticket with two other candidates, joint campaign was about \$10,000.</p>
<p>What he loved about the process</p>	<p>"I ran as an architect and talked about a vision for sustainable growth, and talked to voters about the public transit system and people were incredible responsive. The process forced me to be plain and powerful in communicating."</p>
<p>On creativity and politics</p>	<p>"I had over 75 people involved in drafting my platform, which led to the formation of my own organization and helped develop new leaders with new energy. Creatives have incredible ability to paint visual images and bring a point of view that is refreshing and different to the process of</p>

	governing. Creativity brings necessary friction to spark innovation. My presence on the city council forced other members to shift perspective. I spent a lot of time recruiting other designers to positions in city government where they could exercise influence.”
Lessons learned:	Maurice says: “The most important thing I did was take the entire community through a planning process that led to a scrapping of the entire zoning rule book and created a new document based on mixed use. It took three years and led to ordinances that radically changed development in the city.” Tom says: Maurice used the skills of visioning, planning, drafting and convening charettes that he uses in teaching and professional practice to led Charlottesville to a more sustainable, creative and socially just built environment. Not bad for an amateur, first-time officer-holder.
More information	http://www.virginia.edu/uvatoday/newsRelease.php?id=2996
Contact	http://www.arch.virginia.edu/faculty/MauriceCox



	<p>Dom Betro, President of \$18 million social service agency, says “As a City Councilman, I can make a difference, I can make things happen”</p> 
Creative background	Since 1985 President/CEO of Family Service Association of Western Riverside County, an \$18 million social service agency that employs 450 people and which serves 55,000 people annually. Also Instructor of Management at the University of California, Riverside, since 1989.
First elected	Elected to City Council, City of Riverside, California, in 2004. Defeated for re-election in 2007 by 7 votes.
Why did you run?	“To make a difference on issues I’ve worked on all my life - to impact policy and make it possible to deliver more quality services in the community.”
Cost of election	First campaign was a “very tough race” against an Assistant District Attorney (which in his area is “usually an automatic win”). Spent total of \$150,000 (matching opponent), mostly from \$100 and \$200 gifts. Won by 43 votes in a run-off.
What he loved about the process	“I find it very natural to transfer my skills as a nonprofit executive to the political arena. I enjoy campaigning and it’s a challenge to develop the strategy and engage the voters. I love it. It’s been a lot of fun.”
On creativity and politics	“We need more people from this sector, whether it be arts and culture or human services, but with this strong community nonprofit experience, to get involved in electoral positions because it is certainly within our skill sets and we are well positioned to do this. I find it very natural to transfer my skills to this process.”
Lessons learned	Dom says: “To my creative peers – you need to be bold, to take risks and be willing to take your knowledge and experience and help your communities and your government in new ways – in elective office. Become a policy maker and impact the issues that are near dear to you should be perfectly consistent with the reasons why you got into this work in the first place. It should be a natural evolution of your talent and passion.”

*Creative Elected Official
Profile #2*

	Tom says: Dom was busy in his four years – helping to guide the re-development of Riverside’s historic downtown, including a renovation of the 1928 Fox Theater into a performing arts center and developing a \$1 million continuum of care comprehensive service plan to deal with homelessness after convincing the business community to take a holistic approach to this problem. That’s what can happen when you move from being an outsider begging the system to do the right thing to being a creative leader who can help make the right things happen.
More information	http://www.philanthropy.com/free/articles/v18/i13/13002201.htm
Contact	http://www.betroforcouncil.com

	<p>Cara Jennings, from feisty performing activist to city commissioner!</p> 
<p>Creative background</p>	<p>Cara Jennings is a long-time environmental activist and an anarchist. She co-founded the Radical Cheerleaders. From their web site: “Radical Cheerleading is Protest+Performance. It’s activism with pom poms and middle fingers extended. It’s screaming F*** CAPITALISM while doing a split. The Radical Cheerleaders started when once upon a time, two magical sisters from the land of Florida named Cara and Aimee decided that regular old protests on street corners holding signs and waving at oncoming traffic was just not RADICAL enough. They made pom-poms out of plastic bags and passed their cheers out in zine form. Soon enough, Radical Cheerleading spread like blue bonnet margarine on vegan biscuits. Squads are popping up at an alarmingly bad ass rate, from us here in Memphis, to Austin, New York, Atlanta, New Orleans...”</p>  <p><i>Creative Elected Official - Profile #3</i></p>
<p>First elected</p>	<p>City Commissioner, Lake Worth, Florida – March, 2006, at age 29</p>
<p>Why did you run?</p>	<p>“I was active in the community for four years and was frustrated with decisions being made and I wanted to use the electoral process to bring new ideas to the table. Issues I was interested in included affordable housing, green practices for the city, curbing gentrification and getting government to benefit more people and getting more people to participate.</p>
<p>Cost of election</p>	<p>Raised \$5,000 for the first race, 100% from small donations. She had to participate in a run-off and raised another \$4,000. Her opponent was a local developed who spent \$35,000 on his race. Won the run off with 1,800 votes.</p>
<p>What she loved about the process</p>	<p>“I was really excited to go door to door and engage in conversation and tell my story. When you knock on doors people are gracious and appreciative of</p>

	the fact that you've taken the time to listen.”
On creativity and politics	“People from business use money to win, creative community can use creativity to win change. Creativity is an incredible tool that can't be underestimated as an asset when running for local office. It played out in my race and helped me win.”
Great quote	“Being in government is like chewing a piece of fat. You don't get very far very fast.”
Lessons learned	Cara says: I'm delivering the goods in non-traditional ways. It's more in what projects I've voted down so far – projects that I feel don't have popular support - than what I've been able to propose. As a young person new to this job, I'm spending a lot of time reading city documents, educating the other commissioners and getting a Green Planning Board to guide development.” Tom says: If an anarchist radical cheerleader can get elected in a conservative state like Florida, despite being heavily outspent by a local developer, I think we can conclude that voters are perfectly willing to give a creative candidate with a sound platform a chance.
More information	In These Times article - http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/2665/
Contact	http://www.lakeworth.org

	Guy Padgett, Very much at home: a gay mayor in Wyoming 
Creative background	Was Executive Director of the Wyoming Symphony Orchestra at time of first election, and former staff member at an art museum. In spare time plays Xbox “Simpsons Road Rage” and reads diplomatic histories of Renaissance-era Italian nation-states. He was trained as a graphic designer.
First elected	Elected to City Council, Casper, Wyoming in 2002 and re-elected in 2006, now serving until 2010. Elected to mayor by unanimous vote by fellow council members in November 2005. At 27, was youngest mayor of Casper, and first openly gay.
Why did you run?	“Wyoming is an aging state. An ongoing joke here is that our biggest export is young people. I ran to show young people a different way that we really care about young people. It's important that everyone feels that can participate, that they <i>do</i> participate.”
Cost of election	Spent \$3,000 for his first race and got 58% in the general election. Used friends and family to do a door-to-door campaign. Considers that an average-to-low amount for Casper campaigns.
What he loves about the process	“I believe people should be judged by their character and not by any one characteristic. I've found that to be true in Casper. My getting elected had nothing to do with my sexuality. It's about bus systems, it's about fixing roads and serving the community.”
On creativity and politics	“I designed and produced my own campaign flyers and mailing pieces. I couldn't afford to hire an outside designer. One of the biggest things in running a campaign is the way you communicate your message. The skills I had from making a case in grant writing – communicating simply and in a compelling manner – was very relevant. Also the ability to present data in a way that speaks to the heart as well as to the mind was key in building coalitions and persuading people.”
Lessons learned	Guy says: “For America to truly function we need to put aside our differences – to come together. That makes us stronger as a country. When we close ourselves off to ideas, to people, to philosophies – then

	we cut ourselves off from solutions and potential benefits.” Tom says: Casper is the home town of Matthew Sheppard, a classmate of Padgett’s who was murdered in nearby Laramie in 1998. A major building in Casper and a football field are named after another native son, Dick Cheney. So I think it’s a huge deal that a young man who is openly gay and highly motivated by a desire to serve the community was twice elected to local office. In a time when many politicians lead by dividing people and fermenting hatred, it is a tonic and restorative for American democracy to see such a creative person win local election.
More information	http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/16/national/16casper.html
Contact	http://www.casperwy.gov/content/council/members.asp

BECOME THE CANDIDATE YOU LONG TO SEE

Run, Baby, Run! This is where I’d love for many of the readers of this book to end up. There are over one hundred thousand local elected positions across the USA. We need folks to serve on school boards, library boards, park district commissions, city councils and country commissions. These are mainly part-time positions with no pay or nominal pay. In some large states and large cities, local elected officials are paid more substantial wages.

I hope this book has convinced you that you are perfectly able and needed for these positions.

Jennifer Granholm was elected Governor of Michigan in 2002. In November of 2003 she addressed the annual conference of ArtServe Michigan, the state’s arts advocacy organization. She inherited a budget crisis that forced her to make a number of controversial cuts in the state’s programming. One of these was a 50% hit for the Michigan arts council. She nevertheless faced an audience of artists, arts administrators and culture supporters with, of all things, a call for artists to run for office!

"Although I have said that everything is on the table to resolve the \$1 billion deficit, know that I am sympathetic. But I need your creativity and some of the other skills that belong to the artist and are needed in the domain of budget-making: skills like unflagging persistence, like the painter’s intense attention to detail, the musician’s capacity to stand dissonance, the writer’s turn of compelling phrase, the director’s ability to heighten tension and drama.

And we need you to help create economic growth. We need you to help provide the fun, the life, the entertainment, the color, the buzz. It is the arts that fuel the growth in our cities. It is the arts that provide the magnetism to bring people here, the creative class that provides the interest, the odd, the delightful, the humor, the music, the aesthetics.

Finally, we need you as a counter-balance to our fanatical materialism. You remind us that the internal Sturm und Drang of the starving actor is well worth a delicious moment on stage. You remind us that dark periods do not all need to be medicated with the latest antidepressant, but sometimes reflect the soul’s struggle to give birth to something new.

You are the ones who give birth to humor in a world that gets too darned serious about a rude driver, a mean nun or a self-important governor. In times of war and high unemployment you give life spice and, like a great painter, you give life perspective.

And about this disconnect between art and politics: It is true that politics ends up flattening down the artistic edge. For in this line of work, you are either a zero or a sum.

You are a Democrat or a Republican. You are pro-this or anti-that. There is little room to be nuanced, textured, deep or subtle. So, I think that we just ought to elect more artists. Not just wrestlers and movie stars, either, but musicians and painters, dancers, filmmakers and poets.

Just don’t run for governor for another 7 years." - <http://www.michigan.gov/gov>

Vaclav Havel on Intellectuals + Politics

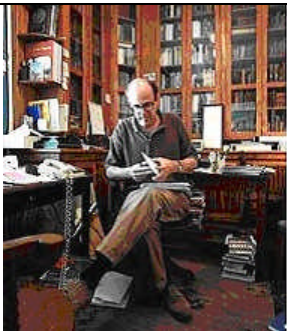


Vaclav Havel, then the President of the Czechoslovak Republic, a playwright and former dissident who spent a number of years in his country's jails for his words and work, said the following at a Joint Session of Congress (February 21, 1990):

“The salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and In human responsibility... If I subordinate my political behavior to this imperative mediated to me by my conscience, I can't go far wrong....

This is why I ultimately decided -- after resisting for a long time -- to accept the burden of political responsibility. I am not the first, nor will I be the last, intellectual to do this...If the Hope of the world lies in human consciousness, then it is obvious that intellectuals cannot go on forever avoiding their share of responsibility for the world and hiding their distaste for politics under an alleged need to be independent....

When Thomas Jefferson wrote that ‘Governments are instituted among Men deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed,’ it was a simple and important act of the human spirit. What gave meaning to that act, however, was the fact that author backed it up with his life. It was not just the words, it was his deeds as well.”

	<p>Richard Howorth, Mr. Mayor, what book should I get my ten-year old niece?</p>
<p>Creative background</p>	<p>A lifetime resident of Oxford, Mississippi, Richard and his wife founded Square Books in the central town square in 1979. William Ferris, director of the Center for Southern Culture at nearby Ole Miss said “Square Books really is an anchor in the soul of Oxford.” Oxford was the home of Nobel laureate William Faulkner. The bookstore operates an annex for remainders, operates a café, hosts a weekly radio show, operates a kid's program and offers a full schedule of author visits and readings. Richard also served as the President of the American Bookseller's Association, a trade group representing 1,200 local independent book stores.</p>
<p>First elected</p>	<p>Elected Mayor in 2001. Re-elected in 2005. Won first election by defeating incumbent by 119 votes.</p>
<p>Why did you run?</p>	<p>“I was dissatisfied with the current council. They weren't open and had made some bad decisions. I tried to help them but it got to the point where I was adversarial with the mayor. I realized that being a politician was not what I wanted to do with my life but I also realized that if I didn't at least try to run for public office that I was essentially forfeiting my voice as a citizen. I filed with five minutes left before the deadline. I was going to run for alderman but a friend had already filed and the mayor's slot was vacant.”</p>
<p>What he loved about the process</p>	<p>“In a democracy I really believe each of us has an obligation and privilege to serve in public life...It requires you to listen to all sides to respect each and every citizen.”</p>
<p>On creativity and politics</p>	<p>Should creatives run for office? “Yes, some of the most important elements of creativity in our society are being compromised. The Patriot Act and the religious conservative movement are serious matters that</p>

Creative Elected Official -
Profile #5

	are compromising the traditional abilities of artists in this country.”
Lessons learned	<p>Richard says: “It’s an incredible personal experience. Running for office allows you to walk around a neighborhood and knock on peoples doors and say ‘Hi, I’m running for office – what are your concerns and ideas about the future of our community?’ That leads to terribly interesting conversations and you learn something. So I would encourage people to attempt it. You have a lot to offer.”</p> <p>Tom says: Richard has brought the quiet authority of a lover of books and local culture and the experience of an entrepreneur and advocate for freedom of expression and a new tone to local government. Reading about the changes that have occurred in Oxford as a result of his bookstore and public service, you get the impression that the civic space has changed and the city is enjoying both economic and civic prosperity.</p>
More information	http://jthiggins.com/sites/richardformayor/index.shtml
Contact	http://www.oxfordms.net/boards/aldermenindex.htm

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



[Tom Tresser](#) is a consultant, producer, educator and trainer works with individuals, companies and communities to leverage and amplify their creative assets in order to solve problems, create economic value and trigger civic engagement. In 2007 he designed and produced training programs for the provincial government of Saskatchewan on how to use the arts and creativity for local economic development. He was director of cultural development at Peoples Housing, in north Rogers Park, Chicago, where he created a community arts program that blended the arts, education and micro-enterprise. Tom has acted in some 40 shows and produced over 100 plays, special events, festivals and community programs. He was an arts activist, having organized support for pro-arts candidates and developed a cultural policy think tank at Roosevelt University in the early 1990's, where he taught "Arts & Public Policy." In 2003 he was appointed Visiting Fellow in Arts and Culture at the DePaul University College of Commerce's Ryan Center for Creativity and Innovation. Tom was elected to the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School's Local School Council and served from 2004 to 2006. He was a co-founder of Protect Our Parks, a neighborhood effort to stop the privatization of public space in Chicago. He was a lead organizer for [No Games Chicago](#), an all-volunteer grassroots effort that opposed Chicago's 2016 Olympic bid. He has taught workshops on "The Politics of Creativity – A Call To Service" for arts service organizations in six states. He has taught a number of classes on art, creativity and civic engagement for Loyola University, School of the Art Institute, the Illinois Institute of Technology, and DePaul University. Tom also consults with arts organizations on strategic planning, audience development and peer-to-peer marketing. Tom has published a web-based project, "[America Needs You!](#)" – about the need for artists to get involved in politics. Tom was the [Green Party](#) candidate for the position of President of the Board of Commissioners of Cook County in November 2010 election. Tom teaches "[Got Creativity? Strategies & Tools for the Next Economy](#)" (IIT Stuart School of Business), "[Introduction to the Creative Economy](#)" (online for [Project Polymath](#)), and "[Acting Up – Using Theater & Technology for Social Change](#)" (online for DePaul University's School for New Learning). He is working to fight privatization (www.publicassets.us) and to establish a public bank in Illinois (www.illinoispublicbanking.org).



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