

APRIL 19, 2007

Lansing State Journal

# OPINION

---

Lansing State Journal



Founded 1855

---

## Editorial Board

Leslie Hurst President and Publisher

Michael K. Hirten Executive Editor

Stephanie Angel Managing Editor

Elaine Kulhanek Community Conversations Editor

Derek Melot Assistant Editorial Page Editor

---

## OUR OPINIONS

# Arts funds

## Continual reductions in support by state are counterproductive

**T**he arts deserve support in tough times, even in the tough times the state now faces with its 2007 and 2008 budgets.

Lawmakers seeking budget fixes may find a few million dollars in additional cuts to arts programs, but the cost doesn't match the financial gain. In the 2007 budget, Michigan was set to spend only \$43 million of its \$9 billion general fund on the Department of History, Arts and Libraries.

Additional cutbacks are counterproductive to Michigan, a message at the core of a rally by the arts community that drew as many as 200 people to the State Capitol on Wednesday.

Leslie Donaldson, executive director of the Arts Council of Greater Lansing, said an immediate priority for arts advocates is ending the moratorium on current year arts and cultural grants.

"Regionally, (the moratorium) affects 30 to 40 full-time jobs, 1,000 artists and \$750,000," Donaldson explained.

And the moratorium is just one facet of a broad attack on arts funding in Michigan.

Since its creation, the Department of History, Arts and Libraries' budget has been plunging. In 2002, HAL spent \$65 million in general fund dollars. By the 2007 budget, its allotment was down to \$43 million. (HAL also has other sources of funding.)

Senate Republicans, in their plan to deal with a \$900 million-plus deficit for 2007, have called for an additional 50 percent cut in arts and cultural grants. (Please note, that even such a deep cut nets the state only \$3.6 million.)

And if arts funding staggers out of the 2007 budget year, it faces Granholm's 2008 budget — with a \$6 million cut in general fund dollars for HAL. That's, one of the largest percentage cuts for any state department in Granholm's plan.

Of course, arts and cultural education cannot rest solely on the good intentions of legislators. Private citizens and local communities must challenge themselves to invest in the arts.

Michigan lawmakers also are constitutionally directed to balance the state's budget.

But the big picture is this: The state does not gain by gutting arts funding just to trim a deficit by a few percentage points.