

The Minnesota Legacy Campaign



The Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment was a groundbreaking and historic change in how states fund the arts. It was the largest arts and culture ballot initiative in American history, putting dedicated funding for the arts and culture into Minnesota's state constitution for the next 25 years. It also created dedicated funding for land conservation, water conservation, and parks. The Amendment campaign can be viewed from many directions depending upon which of the four issues you were working on.

The press only seemed interested in one of the four funds created by the Amendment – the land conservation area, favored by sportsmen. If you look at the public record, you will find that it was the only story that is told because the press was only interested in the conflicts it perceived between sportsmen, environmentalists, and arts advocates. They got it all wrong. In the end, it wasn't a story of conflict. It was a story about how people with wildly different interests and resources worked together for the common good. It was a story of all of us getting out of our "silos."

Arts people are most interested in the question of how did the *arts* get in the bill and how did it pass? What lessons were learned that other states could use in advocating for the arts and perhaps passing their own constitutional amendments?

It's important to note that the many elements of our winning campaign were built over seventeen years. This was not a quick fix, and it was a very risky strategy. Other states have found other ways to create dedicated funding for the arts and culture that did not take so long and which were not as risky in terms of the advocacy group's organizational commitment and use of internal resources. The difference in what we have accomplished in Minnesota is that we put dedicated funding for the arts and culture in our state's constitution, the highest possible level of dedication, which means that legislators cannot divert these funds in bad budget years. This dedication can only be removed by another statewide vote of the people in another constitutional amendment, unlike other dedications which can be undone statutorily by the next legislature.

CAMPAIGN AT A GLANCE

Funding Mechanism: 0.375 percent Sales Tax Increase; less than 4 cents on a \$10 purchase, created through an amendment to Minnesota's constitution.





How the Amendment got on the Ballot: On Feb. 14, 2008, after a 10-year Legislative effort, the State Legislature passed the bill to place the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Constitutional Amendment on the ballot.

Election Date: Nov. 4, 2008 – General Election

Outcome: YES: 56% NO: 39%

Overall Campaign Budget: Approximately \$3.7 million, 84% of which was spent on voter contact. In addition, there was an education campaign that spent approximately \$1M on polling and additional education literature and advertising.

Funding Generated: \$7.5 billion state-wide over a 25-year period:

-  33 percent for clean water
 -  33 percent for wildlife habitat
 -  19.75 percent for arts and cultural resources
 -  14.25 percent for parks and trails
- Language on the Ballot:**

Clean Water, Wildlife, Cultural Heritage and Natural Areas

"Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to dedicate funding to protect our drinking water sources; to protect, enhance, and restore our wetlands, prairies, forests, and fish, game, and wildlife habitat; to preserve our arts and cultural heritage; to support our parks and trails; and to protect, enhance, and restore our lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater by increasing the sales and use tax rate beginning July 1, 2009, by three-eighths of one percent on taxable sales until the year 2034?"

OVERVIEW

In November of 2008, Minnesota passed the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, increasing the state sales tax by 3/8 of 1 percent to create four new dedicated funding streams for land conservation, water conservation, parks and trails, and arts and culture.

The arts and history alone will receive 19.75 percent of the proceeds of the new tax; this means a new pool of funding projected to total \$47 million per year.

This was the largest arts and culture ballot initiative in American History (let alone Minnesota history). Minnesota is now the only state with dedicated funding for the arts in its state constitution. In fact, we are the only state other than Massachusetts that even mentions the arts in our constitution. It was also the largest conservation ballot initiative in American history.

The Minnesota Legacy Campaign

Three streams of political action came together to make it possible to achieve this goal:

- **First, the arts community spent decades building a robust and politically sophisticated statewide grassroots network that fed into our success (leading organization: Minnesota Citizens for the Arts).**
- **Second, the sportsmen’s community put the idea of a constitutional amendment to dedicate resources onto the table (leading organization: Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance).**
- **Third, the conservation community on a national level has invested resources into helping local ballot initiatives succeed through polling, training, and other assistance, all of which fed into the effort (leading organizations: Conservation Minnesota and the Nature Conservancy).**

In addition to these important factions, there were a number of very smart and politically experienced Minnesotans who came together to run the statewide VoteYes! Campaign.

The twin successes of getting the Amendment through many legislative battles, and then passing the Amendment with the voters as part of a cooperative political campaign, is a result of many factors. Both phases have literally dozens of heroes and there are many players on both stages who deserve credit, including issue advocates, legislative leaders, and campaign staff.

In “Phase One,” the legislative lobbying that resulted in the passage of the proposed Amendment from the legislature on to the public was successful because it combined:

- **massive grassroots mobilization,**
- **professional lobbying,**
- **ideally situated arts and conservation legislative leaders and advocates,**
- **judicious political giving and activism in support of candidates sympathetic to the arts and environment,**
- **a willingness to take risks.**

In “Phase Two,” the political campaign that resulted in 56% of the Minnesota public voting “YES” on the Amendment was successful because:

- **The campaign brought together the many interests represented by the bill into a coalition of over 300 nonprofit organizations that reached into every corner of, and every political party, of Minnesota.**
- **We focused on the importance of the quality of life issues of access to the arts, clean water, and protecting our environment.**
- **We began fundraising early.**
- **We hired a professional campaign manager.**
- **We were extremely targeted in our campaign efforts.**
- **And the language of the ballot measure itself was very important.**

Our hope is that, through the passage of this Constitutional Amendment, we have created a great legacy for the arts and the environment in Minnesota.

Sheila Smith

Executive Director
Minnesota Citizens for the Arts