

Contributing by Reducing

Word Count: 492

Starting at a young age, students are taught that addition increases and subtraction decreases. From a logical standpoint, reducing—or subtracting—from an area should not contribute to that same area. Together, we have the potential to change this piece of logic. This year, Hawai'i improved its ranking from fifteenth to thirteenth place in a National Education Report. While an improvement in our state's national test scores is cause for celebration, an issue in Hawai'i today is improving the state through the Arts. We, as individuals, as a community, and as a state, are faced with the obligation and ability to ensure that our community is comprised of well-rounded individuals by promoting and reducing the Arts.

The Art in Public Places Program's mission statement is "to promote, perpetuate, preserve and encourage culture and the arts, history and the humanities as central to the quality of life of the people of Hawai'i." Under this program in 1967, the State Legislature of Hawai'i produced the Art in State Buildings Law that required one percent of new buildings' construction costs be used to commission or purchase works of art. This revolutionary piece of legislation marked Hawai'i as the first state to have an art law based on a percentage in a separate fund.

There is an imbalance in our emphasis on the Arts as compared to that of Academics. Individuals support and improve communities and nations more effectively when those people are well-rounded and have a broader understanding of the different aspects of the environment around them on both physical and mental levels of understanding. With global and local disputes ranging from the Middle East to Rail, we do not have the luxury of leaving our futures to chance. We need to further educate individuals about cultural aspects in addition to dates and numbers. Even though promoting artworks is a highly desirable goal that should be continued,

our buildings, historical sites, and natural environment do not need so many artworks to divert onlookers. Instead of one percent, I propose that the Hawai'i State Legislature add an amendment to the law that would reduce the required percentage to half of that amount.

This reduction would enable the other half of the funds to be repurposed and donated to other applications and projects that promote the Arts. These funds can potentially improve educational programs in schools for subjects such as Dance, Band/Orchestra, Choir, and more. Also, the scope can be expanded on a larger scale to promote programs like the Honolulu Symphony that benefit not only the youth but all generations. There is certainly not a shortage of meaningful programs to choose from to receive these well-purposed funds.

By amending and reducing the Art in State Buildings Law, we can better ensure that Hawai'i develops into a well-rounded community, preserve the natural beauty of our state, and better prepare ourselves for the future. And in the process, we can prove that we can make contributions by reducing.