

Jolanda Jones | District 18

1. How do you personally participate in the arts and culture both in Houston and when you travel?

I love the arts. I love artistic expression for me on a variety of fronts, including fashion, and I've often been misunderstood because I am artsy and eclectic. I believe if more emphasis were placed on the arts in school, then it would become more readily accepted and understood.

My father was an arts major at Texas Southern University, and one of his challenges, that I believe led to his suicide, was that people didn't appreciate how art could be so important to Black man of his generation. My uncle told me a story about how he and my father were driving back from Los Angeles visiting family, and the sunrise was so beautiful that my dad pulled the car over to the side of the highway just to draw it. If more people would have understood my father's love of painting and would've accepted him for it, perhaps he might still be alive.

I actually believe more arts education could do a lot to combat mental illness, especially as it relates to depression and anxiety. I strongly believe that public art and arts education needs to be valued and funded at higher levels.

2. Would you support restoring full funding to National Public Radio and PBS?

Yes. These networks are not only an outlet for artistic expression, but for free speech in general.

3. Would you be willing to support a request for appropriations directly to the county or the City specifically for arts? Each congress person can submit requests for their district every year.

Yes. I would support funding for public art, for arts education, for community-based arts and music programs, and for economic development dollars for programs using art to increase tourism and otherwise create jobs.

4. Would you support continued funding at the 2024 level or higher for the National Endowment to the Arts?

Following in the footsteps of the late Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, I would support and advocate for continued and higher funding for the NEA.

5. How would you support arts in Congressional District 18?

In addition to advocating for more funding, I would lift up and attend local cultural events in the district. I would continue and promote the 18th Congressional District Art Competition for high school students, where winning artworks are displayed at the nation's capitol. Given my love for fashion, I would work to create an 18th Congressional District fashion competition for original creations – think Project Runway but without all the drama.