



**For Immediate Release**  
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## Sen. Darling MIA for Milwaukee on Arts Funding Cut

In recent weeks Sen. Alberta Darling canceled meetings with the chair of the Milwaukee Arts Board and its members in an effort to avoid discussing a looming Wisconsin Arts Board funding cut that she and other members of the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) ended up approving yesterday.

Alderman Michael J. Murphy, MAB chair, said the committee's vote Thursday (May 5) to cut the state arts board funding by 66% will mean a reduction of approximately \$30,000 in MAB funding for 2012. "We unsuccessfully tried to meet with Senator Darling on at least two occasions during the last few weeks," he said. "Another meeting was scheduled for today, but the vote was yesterday and so today's meeting was then canceled at Senator Darling's request. To me that was disingenuous and also shows a lack of basic, professional courtesy."

"At one time Senator Darling was a moderate and at least willing to sit down, listen and discuss issues," he said.

"But today when I see her it's almost like watching the movie *'Invasion of the Body Snatchers'* – she's now someone I don't recognize," Alderman Murphy said.

Alderman Murphy said the JFC vote to cut arts funding and move the state arts board to the Department of Tourism "is not about saving money."

"There are no fiscal savings in what they (JFC) did, and they could easily have reallocated some of the Department of Tourism funding back to the state arts board without any impact on the \$3.6 billion state budget deficit," he said.

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## **Sen. Darling goes MIA/ADD ONE**

Alderman Nik Kovac, a city Arts Board member whose district includes two wards represented by Senator Darling, said the cuts approved by Senator Darling (a JFC co-chair) and the JFC could be “job killers.” “The constituents I represent and that Senator Darling represents know that the arts create jobs and significant economic activity that is vital to the success of the city and the region,” he said.

“With the huge number of artists and arts patrons that Senator Darling represents, I’m surprised that she would not fight harder against the cuts. The economic benefit to the local economy is backed by research that is widely recognized by many of her constituents who are regulars at Milwaukee galleries, theater performances, and other arts venues,” Alderman Kovac said.

MAB member Sandra McSweeney, who is also one of Senator Darling’s constituents, said the vote to slash arts funding shows how “out of balance” the Legislature is today.

“The budget and fiscal issues in Wisconsin did not happen overnight and they cannot be fixed overnight,” Ms. McSweeney said. “I am disappointed that there was not a move to compromise on the (original) proposal to cut funding to the state arts board by 73%. It would have been nice if Senator Darling would have pushed forward with an amendment closer to a 10% cut, but she didn’t.”

Anne Kingsbury, MAB member and founder of Woodland Pattern Book Center, said the cuts again put the state of Wisconsin at the bottom of the list of states supporting the arts (No. 47) and also “erodes quality of life reasons for new businesses to come to Wisconsin.” “It also significantly lowers the number of reasons for tourists to visit our state for activities at museums, theatres, musical performances, galleries and literary centers,” said Ms. Kingsbury, who is also a Sen. Darling constituent.

According to Ms. Kingsbury, the cuts mean that several organizations in Milwaukee will likely be reducing arts programs that benefit neighborhoods and children.