

North Woods GRIZZLIES

St. Louis County Schools
Independent School District No. 2142

To Gov. Mark Dayton, Sen. Tom Bakk, Rep. David Dill and other members of the Minnesota Legislature,

We don't hate the art; we just think we can do better.

As junior and senior art students in high school, we have come to appreciate art and how it can affect the moods, emotions, and opinions of people.

Recently we learned about the art that hangs in the state Capitol, and the planned renovations for the building. Even to high school students, it is exceedingly obvious that the art that currently adorns the Capitol building's walls is extremely outdated and biased to those who were in power at the time the art was created. Much of it is even considered offensive to some of the population.

As a state, our values have changed from what they once were. No longer are we fixated on conquering other peoples and gaining land. Modernization has changed us, and instead we value having peace and equality among our diverse population. We want to bring people together, not drive them apart.

The art in the Capitol building, which affects the minds of so many people, does not represent these values in the slightest. It shows us our history, when we were not equal and peaceful. We do not want to forget our history, lest we are doomed to repeat it, but we must look to the future.

In class, we were asked to create a work of art that represented what Minnesota meant to us. In a small town in northern Minnesota that doesn't get much recognition, we are able to see things that others do not. We were all able to create something meaningful and beautiful using the image of the home that we see through our individual eyes. In these works, we see the present and future of a generation that is so promising.

We want our voices to be heard and show you how we see our Minnesota. As you work to repair the Capitol, please think about these images and the stories they tell. Let us show you the future we are striving for. Attached are examples of our art and artist statements. Please take a moment to view them. This is your opportunity to create change. Thank you.

Sincerely,

North Woods Art Students

Rylee Bandelin <i>Rylee Bandelin</i>	Alexis Ingebretsen <i>Alexis Ingebretsen</i>	Brystin Vitense <i>Brystin Vitense</i>	Tiandra Geyshick <i>Tiandra Geyshick</i>
Aura Gustafson <i>Aura Gustafson</i>	Noah Squires <i>Noah Squires</i>	Eric Prochnow <i>Eric Prochnow</i>	Taylor Midthun <i>Taylor Midthun</i>
Hunter Midthun <i>Hunter Midthun</i>	Patricia McCarthy <i>Patricia McCarthy</i>	Emily Koch <i>Emily Koch</i>	Bailey Johnson <i>Bailey Johnson</i>
Sydney Barnett <i>Sydney Barnett</i>	Chase Holman <i>Chase Holman</i>	Molly Blake <i>Molly Blake</i>	Jeffrey Janssen <i>Jeffrey Janssen</i>
Rachel Land <i>Rachel Land</i>			



May 22, 2015

Dear Minnesota State Legislatures and Governor Mark Dayton:

"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek." -Barack Obama

I am an art teacher at North Woods School in Cook. I am writing to share some student art with you in the hopes that it moves you to rethink art in the Capitol. The major renovation going on at the Capitol provides a **once-in-a-lifetime opportunity** to update the art to better reflect Minnesota's history and to better represent all of Minnesota's people.

Last year, I worked at North View Junior High School in Brooklyn Park. My students and I did a similar art project. First, they learned about the current art in the Capitol and some of its history. Then they were assigned to create the kind of art they would like to see at the Capitol—the kind of art that would represent Minnesota today. We wrote you similar letters, sharing the art. I have included copies with this letter. **We did not get a response.** This is an important issue to me and my students, so I am trying again.

All of what I wrote back in May 2014 still holds true. I would be interested in hearing your thoughts on the need to better interpret the existing Capitol art and the need to add new art. Also, I think this is a great art project for students. It teaches them history. It teaches them about the impact of art. It teaches them about the power of civic engagement. If you agree, I hope you could encourage its replication through the Department of Education. Lastly, I still think it would be a wonderful idea to have an annual competition, and reserve a spot at the Capitol to showcase the best student art of the year.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,


Rachel Latuff

*Secondary Visual Arts Teacher
North Woods School, ISD #2142
Cook, Minnesota*

"The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance."-Aristotle