



## Holyoke Victory Theater gets another \$600,000 tax credits grant from Massachusetts

By Patricia Cahill, Special to The Republican, August 18, 2010



*The Republican / Don Treeger*

Massachusetts Secretary of State William F. Galvin, second from right, presents a mock check for \$1.2 million to Donald T. Sanders, second from left, executive artistic director of the Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts, Wednesday at the Victory Theatre in Holyoke. The check represents state tax credits. Also pictured are state Sen. Michael R. Knapik, far left, Mayor Elaine A. Pluta, and state Rep. Michael F. Kane, far right.

**HOLYOKE** - Massachusetts Secretary of State William F. Galvin came to Suffolk Street Wednesday to announce that the state had granted another \$600,000 in historic tax credits toward the renovation of the 91-year-old **Victory Theatre**.

Together with **\$600,000 in tax credits granted** in April, that amounts to \$1.2 million for the historic landmark, and that's the sum that appeared on the giant mock-up of a check that Galvin held up to the cheers of about 75 arts activists who had gathered at the Suffolk Street theater's long-shuttered doors.

The Victory Theatre was built in 1919 for stage productions, became a movie theater in 1931, and closed in 1979.

But even the dust and fallen plaster can't disguise its grandeur. Three tiers of 1,600 seats rise above the orchestra pit. The stage is flanked by the remnants of soaring pilasters, murals and carved ornamentation, and marble stairs wind past walls of rare Brazilian oak.

In Holyoke's salad days, visitors used to splurge on stays at the nearby Nonotuck Hotel to enjoy the theater's productions.

Galvin predicted that that's the kind of symbiosis that will emerge from the renovation, estimated to be completed in December 2012.

"There's a temptation to think this is all about nostalgia and sentimentality," the secretary said. "It's not that I'm not a sentimental guy - but this is about economic activity!" Once the theater is restored, he said, it will benefit businesses from restaurants to parking lots.

Galvin cited the Colonial Theater in Pittsfield and the Hanover Theater in Worcester as examples of renovations that have become destination sites for travelers.

The "tax credit" system takes a little explaining. It means that the Victory will not get its grants outright in cash. Rather, the cash comes through only when renovation has been completed to the very strict specifications of the state's Historic Commission.

"It's not a feel-good grant or a giveaway," said Galvin. "You earn it."

Donald T. Sanders, executive artistic director of the **Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts** (MIFA), said that the entire renovation is expected to cost \$27 million, of which \$19 million has been raised. The Victory can also compete for another round of historic tax credits.

Sanders called the Victory "the finest theater of its kind, not only in Holyoke, but in all of the Pioneer Valley region, from Connecticut to the Canadian border." The circular second-story mezzanine is "one of the most beautiful rooms in the state."

Together with Gov. Deval L. Patrick's recent announcement that a computer center is coming to Holyoke, the Victory grant portends "a true Renaissance throughout Holyoke," said Sen. Michael R. Knapik, R-Westfield.

Other officials at the event included Holyoke Mayor Elaine A. Pluta and state Rep. Michael F. Kane. Sanders also singled out Helen Casey, of South Hadley, in the crowd. She has been on a mission to save the Victory from the day it closed its doors.

"If not for Helen Casey," he said, "we would not be standing here today."