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GATEWAY TO IMPERIAL COUNTY

Keep Filner's Congressional Art Competition going

For many of the Valley's youngsters, the opportunity to visit Washington, D.C., is a long-held objective that typically is associated with academic achievement. For obvious reasons, the nation's capital is a drawing force for many young intellectuals and fervent idealists. But, thanks to the efforts of our local representative, the capital has been a welcoming venue for young artists as well.

For some time now, U.S. Rep. Bob Filner, D-Chula Vista, has been holding the Congressional Art Competition in his district in order to give a winning high school student the opportunity to have their artwork showcased at the U.S. Capitol. Indeed, Filner deserves credit for kick starting the competition here in the district.

This year, almost 200 entries were submitted from high school students throughout the 51st District, which includes southern San Diego county and all of Imperial County. While Valley artists didn't make up the majority of artist submissions, it's safe to say that the number of the Valley's entries is just a partial tally of the local talent.

Such an admirable contest no doubt

has prompted local art teachers year after year to be on the lookout for talent that could proudly represent the Valley. It is just as easy to imagine young artists laboring diligently on a favored piece of art that they believe is their ticket to the capital. Or should they fall short of that goal, runners up also have the opportunity to attend a San Diego Padres game which is no small consolation and a good incentive to further develop their creative inclinations.

With public school art programs constantly under the threat of funding cuts, the competition also draws attention to the importance of endorsing the arts. For some of these youngsters, the visual arts provide them a chance to excel and be themselves. Without the proper channels, young artistic talent can also find itself being squandered in nonproductive behavior — namely graffiti.

With Filner's time representing the district coming to a close, we fervently hope whoever is elected to the seat come November sees the importance of promoting the contest, which in the Valley is sorely needed and greatly appreciated.