

Editorial

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The articles in this issue touch on universal aspects of nonprofit and civil society involvement in the development of public policy, specific critical policy areas, as well as the analysis of civil society–government relations in particular regions of the world. Several articles emphasize the critical role of citizens and volunteers, while others focus on institutional-level relations among key organizations in the nonprofit and government sectors, including grant-making foundations. The articles and features here highlight pressing contemporary concerns such as climate change as well as the importance of historical perspective in understanding complex long standing issues such as health care policy. This rich and varied tapestry nicely highlights both the urgency of and the opportunities for deeper and broader research and scholarship at the interface of the nonprofit sector and public policy.

The first article by Angela Bies, Deanna Lee, Charles Lindsey, James Stoutenborough, and Arnold Vedlitz addresses the issue of climate change, examining the way nonprofit organizations help to shape public attitudes towards climate change and public support for climate change policy. Based on analysis of survey data, these authors reach the important conclusion that environmental organizations influence citizens' views on climate change not so much through the sheer political weight of their memberships but more so through the trust and legitimacy they command in the public's mind. This leads to the important recommendation that environmental organizations should be encouraged to “produce and disseminate relevant information and when doing so, seek to maintain their respected positions of legitimacy and trust.”

The second article, by Jeff Brudney and Lucas Meijs, focuses on another special resource that nonprofit organizations bring to the policy process – the energy of their volunteer forces. These authors offer a unique perspective on volunteers – viewing them as a common resource pool that is subject to both depletion and renewal, contingent on appropriate management and policy governance. Accordingly, they apply Elinor Ostrom's principles for managing

common pool resources, calling on public managers to create a general policy for sustaining volunteering in communities to ensure the vitality of volunteer resources over the long run and in the various circumstances where nonprofits depend on this pool to carry out their social missions.

The third article, by Katrina Miller-Stevens and Matthew Gable, turns our attention to media through which contemporary nonprofits deliver some of their policy influence – lobbying in cyberspace. Surveying associations of nonprofit organizations at the state level in the United States, these researchers find that these associations actively use e-mail and other electronic means to influence policy makers, but they are less vigorous in exploiting electronic resources to influence the views of the general public. Given that electronic lobbying is an active, growing, yet underutilized activity, the authors discern that for nonprofit organizations that lobby, a greater understanding of electronic lobbying activities and a more nuanced perspective on effectiveness of these activities is especially important for the sector to become more influential in the policy-making process.

The next two articles take us to two regions of the world far apart geographically – the Caribbean and rural parts of Europe – but which face some of the same challenges in government–nonprofit sector relations. The article by Constantine Iliopoulos, Vladislav Valentinov, Vasyl Kvartiuk, and Bartosz Bartkowski considers the nature of government–nonprofit sector relations in the special context of European rural development. The authors observe that third sector organizations can influence rural development along several lines including policy advocacy work, partnerships with government and through their own direct development projects supplementary to government programming. Examining the literature and various case studies, these researchers turn their particular attention to the LEAD program in Europe which funds public-third sector partnerships, and they identify particular concerns about the structure of public funding programs that appear to undermine the efficiency of third sector partners to government. In particular, they are concerned that goal displacement from adverse fundraising incentives resulting from limited private fund raising opportunities may be undermining the scope for partnership, because managers may follow paths of least resistance and adjust the missions of their organizations in order to obtain public funding. The authors suggest various possible directions for improvement such as having government funders design their policies to favor greater competition for grants, administration of funding programs by higher levels of government in order to minimize local rent seeking, and greater emphasis on the competencies of grant recipients.

Our fifth research article by Glenn Bowen addresses the role of CSOs in economic integration of the Caribbean region, asking whether CSOs in the region

are prepared to effectively participate in the policy process. Based on a survey of CSOs in the region, Bowen finds that Caribbean CSOs shoulder significant responsibility in delivering basic social services, coordinating community-building activities, supporting local economic development, and promoting sustainable development, but play only an insignificant part in policy development. He points to a need for a coordinating organization to give voice and leverage to civil society, so that it can become an effective partner to government in policy and decision making at the regional level.

We have two special features to round out this issue – a new review by Dan Fox of a classic book on health care policy, David Rosner's *A Once Charitable Enterprise*, and an interview by Jim Ferris of Bob Ross, the CEO of the California Endowment, focusing on the foundation's pro-active strategies in health care policy making including the Affordable Care Act, the U.S.'s new health care law. These two pieces are linked in interesting ways. Rosner's book analyzes the cogent history of commercialization of the U.S. health care sector, which Fox extends into the current era. One of the key developments in this story was the conversion of many nonprofit health care institutions into for-profit companies and the formation of health care-related foundations from the public assets received from those conversions. The California Endowment is one of those foundations. Ross's interview reveals a bright side to an otherwise worrisome picture of health care commercialization – the progressive influence that a major health care foundation can have on public policy to help expand access to health care and to support preventive programming to address other critical community issues such as schools and the health of young people.

I hope that this rich and varied mix of articles addressing policy issues in a variety of nonprofit settings and national contexts will appeal to our readers and contributors from all parts of the globe and every corner of the third sector. Please share your thoughts with us.

