Editorial

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Editor's Note

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The articles in this issue examine, in various contexts, some of the diverse ways in which government and public policy impact the viability and operations of nonprofit organizations. These impacts range from influences on nonprofits' autonomy and accountability, on their fund-raising practices, on their capacity to achieve their missions, on the way they allocate their resources, on their ability to collaborate and advocate for policy positions, and indeed on their survival. The settings range from advocacy organizations to child welfare agencies, and from localities in the U.S. to regimes in Egypt and Hungary. The concerns raised here include fraud, misallocation of resources, repression of nonprofit advocacy, and viability of nonprofits themselves. All of the papers dig below the surface of important subjects that call for continuing research and analysis.

In the first article, Joseph Mead and Katherine Warren examine a peculiar but not uncommon variant of nonprofits – organizations whose boards of directors are appointed by government. These “quasi-governmental organizations” occupy a gray space between government and the nonprofit sector in the U.S., requiring special policy attention. The authors offer a set of case studies that exemplify the ways in which these organizations differ from conventional nonprofits. Their analysis highlights issues of autonomy, accountability, and transparency, and as well as the opportunities and hazards these organizations present as vehicles to address social goals.

The second paper, by Putnam Barber and Megan Farwell, examines the challenges of regulating charitable solicitation. The authors apply regulatory disclosure theory to analyze how strategies of public disclosure and transparency can address fraud and abuse in fund raising and the steps that can be taken to make information more useful to donors.

The third article, by Haley Murphy and Robbie Robichau, asks how government policies, especially funding, affect the capacities of nonprofit organizations to carry out their missions. The specific context is child welfare in the U.S.

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but the results are suggestive of broader application. The authors find that the nature and intensity of funding relationships as well as a nonprofit's own organizational culture can determine whether government is a positive or negative influence on a nonprofit's capacity to do its work.

The fourth paper, by Brent Never and Drew Westberg, applies innovative statistical methodology (spatial regression) to examine the spatial effects of governmental expenditures on human services delivered by nonprofit organizations. Provocatively, they detect the presence of free-riding wherein political jurisdictions adjacent to high spending neighboring jurisdictions slacken their expenditures on nonprofit human services, leading to uneven patterns of human services expenditures detrimental to people of lower socioeconomic status. The analysis raises critical questions about how government allocates its resources to the nonprofit sector and how nonprofits deploy resources and services among themselves, and it brings new attention to the importance of examining the spatial dimensions of nonprofit-related policy issues.

The fifth paper, by Catherine Herrold and Mona Atia, takes us to Egypt to study the interface of autocratic government with local advocacy organizations. The authors describe the government's "divide and conquer" strategy which suppresses nonprofits and undercuts their ability to function. This "strong state/weak sector" situation is growing more serious in Egypt, but unfortunately is not limited to that country.

Indeed, our final feature in this issue is a review by Michael Meyer of a new book by Peter Krasztev and Jon Van Til entitled *The Hungarian Patient*. The book describes the increasing suppression of nonprofits in Hungary and the consequent loss of democratic process. Meyer emphasizes the seriousness of the book's message and its wider implications for the countries of Europe.

I hope you enjoy reading this important issue. We are pleased that it can be offered in open access format, so feel free to recommend any of the papers to your friends and colleagues, or indeed to others who should be better informed about the developments examined here.

Thank you.