

Time for Non-Profits to Rethink Lobbying

By Sarah Todd

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We know we're going to be hearing political talk about how to cut the national debt for a long time. Add this to the ongoing debate about how closely nonprofits should be scrutinized by the government, with new coverage this week on a Ways and Means committee chair with nonprofits in his sights.

It's time to revisit the guidelines for how nonprofits can and cannot advocate for their clients and for themselves.

Nonprofits are often confused about where the lines are drawn between advocacy and lobbying. As the Alliance for Nonprofits puts it: "Not all advocacy is lobbying, but all lobbying is advocacy."

Many nonprofits remain confused about how to determine the difference, are worried about the risks and have little time available to devote to it in any case. This seems reason enough to leave lobbying to the large nonprofits whose lawyers and accountants can point the way through the minefield.

But the cost of nonparticipation may be higher than you think and the effort in engagement, lower. The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy states that advocacy work for the poor played a significant role in bringing in \$26.6 billion in benefits to communities over five years.

Thirteen states and 110 nonprofits were examined in the study. And as mentioned in this column previously, the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest asserts that small nonprofits can make an impact by devoting just three hours a week to lobbying activity and shows you how to do it.

[Read the full article](#) .