

For Immediate Release

Philanthropy for Advocacy is Making a Difference in the Northwest

Study found return of \$150 for every dollar invested in policy engagement of 20 nonprofits

Washington, D.C. (9/28/2010) - Philanthropic investments in advocacy and community organizing in four Northwestern states are helping to bring about lasting changes in local and state government policies and programs that benefit poor and other marginalized people, noted a new report released today by a national philanthropy watchdog organization.

Community groups and foundations in the Northwest have developed "a complex, sophisticated movement-building orientation" that collectively has steered more than \$5 billion in wages, expanded services, state housing investments and other benefits in Washington, Oregon, Montana and Idaho, according to the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (<http://www.ncrp.org>).

NCRP's report, Strengthening Democracy, Increasing Opportunities (http://www.ncrp.org/files/publications/gcip-nw_report_low_res.pdf), is aimed at encouraging regional grantmakers to do more, according to Aaron Dorfman, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based organization that monitors and advocates for philanthropy that addresses critical public needs.

"The true test of a philanthropy's success, in our view, boils down to this: does their giving help stimulate real solutions and long-term results that actually touch the lives of people who need help," said Dorfman. "I'm happy to say that in the Northwest, we found evidence that this is happening."

The report looks closely at advocacy activities by 20 local nonprofit organizations in the four

states, funded by foundations from 2005-2009 for a total of \$23.2 million. According to the report's authors, Gita Gulati-Partee and Lisa Ranghelli, for every dollar invested in advocacy, organizing and civic engagement activities of 20 nonprofit groups collectively, there was a return of \$150 in benefits to Northwest communities.

Ranghelli and Gulati-Partee also examined the significant impact and insightful lessons from the policy engagement efforts of four nonprofits in Alaska and Wyoming.

Direct beneficiaries of this advocacy and community involvement ranged from all residents in each state to underserved communities such as the poor, families and children, immigrants, Native Americans, Latinos and other people of color and lesbian and gay people.

In Montana, foundation-funded activities led to the state adopting standards to protect rivers from pollution associated with coal bed methane deposits; expanding access to Medicaid and children's health insurance; and changing election laws in ways that generated higher voter turnout. The report also notes campaigns for higher wages, education reform, immigrant rights, environmental protection and clean energy that received support from private grantmakers.

In Idaho, the report noted successful efforts by community groups, with foundation support, to regulate the spraying of toxic dairy animal waste on farm lands to protect human health and the environment; promote clean energy and green jobs; win state legislative approval for an increase in the state's minimum wage and coverage for farm workers; and the reauthorization and expansion of the Children's Health Insurance Program.

In Oregon, foundations funded policy work promoting early childhood care and education, lesbian and gay rights, worker laws, immigrant and racial justice, tax fairness, tenant rights and criminal justice reform. Successful campaigns stopped a \$1 billion prison construction project, defeated anti-immigrant ballot initiatives, expanded protection for gay, lesbian and transgender people and passed a law providing domestic partnership rights for same sex couples.

In Washington, foundations supported campaigns around homelessness and housing, predatory lending, immigrant rights, protections for Native Americans, access to health care and environmental issues. These efforts persuaded the governor to launch the Washington New Americans Program to welcome immigrants to the state; secured \$300 million in state money

for affordable housing and preservation; provided health care subsidies for low-paid workers and created jobs for low-income residents in Spokane for energy retrofitting homes and businesses.

The Northwest foundations recognized most frequently for being effective partners with local nonprofits in their advocacy, organizing and civic engagement efforts are Campion Foundation (Wash.), Marguerite Casey Foundation (Wash.), McKenzie River Gathering (Ore.), Northwest Health Foundation (Ore.) and Social Justice Fund Northwest (Wash.). NCRP noted The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's work on homelessness and the Bullitt Foundation for their support of clean energy.

The NCRP report, aimed primarily at leaders of nonprofit organizations and foundations, urges grantmakers to put more dollars into community organizing and advocacy - and not just on short-term assistance - to address the needs of underserved and marginalized people.

"Philanthropy Northwest's members are committed to making investments that improve lives and build community-a commitment that has become even more important during this economic downturn," said Carol Lewis, CEO of Philanthropy Northwest, a membership organization of grantmakers. "This report illustrates how our funders have successfully achieved this goal by lifting up the voices of marginalized communities, allowing people to fully participate in the democratic process and advocate on their own behalf."

The full report can be found at the web site of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, www.ncrp.org.

The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy in Washington, D.C. is a national watchdog, research and advocacy organization that promotes philanthropy that serves the public good, is responsive to people and communities with the least wealth and opportunity, and is held accountable to the highest standards of integrity and openness.

###

Featured Nonprofits:

IDAHO

- Idaho Community Action Network (ICAN)
- Idaho Rural Council (IRC)
- Snake River Alliance (SRA)

MONTANA

- Montana Human Rights Network (MHRN)
- Montana Women Vote! (MWV)
- Northern Plains Resource Council (NPRC)

OREGON

- Basic Rights Oregon
- CAUSA: Oregon's Immigrant Rights Coalition
- Center for Intercultural Organizing (CIO)
- Children's Institute (CI)
- Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT)
- Partnership For Safety and Justice (PSJ)
- Rural Organizing Project (ROP)

WASHINGTON

- Community to Community Development (C2C)
- OneAmerica With Justice for All
- Spokane Alliance
- Statewide Poverty Action Network (SPAN)
- United Indians of All Tribes Foundation (UIATF)
- Washington Community Action Network (WCAN!)
- Washington Low Income Housing Alliance

ALASKA

- Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (AYEA)
- Anchorage Faith and Action - Congregations Together (AFACT)

WYOMING

- Equality State Policy Center
- Powder River Basin Resource Council