
A Message From the Executive Director



Dear Colleagues,

The 2016 election season is already in full swing, and voters are likely already experiencing fatigue from the endless news coverage and debates. Even still, before we know it, the election will be over, and many of the voter outreach efforts currently in progress will fade away. However, the smartest people in philanthropy know that civic engagement must take place all the time, not only in election years. This edition of *Responsive Philanthropy* is a special issue devoted to civic engagement and the important work of fostering democracy in the U.S.

In our cover story, “Systems Change in the Yakima Valley,” sector leaders affiliated with the Win/Win Network, George Cheung, EJ Juárez and Kristina Logsdon, discuss a years-long, multifaceted campaign to make the local government in Washington State’s Yakima Valley reflect the local population. They emphasize that, to achieve lasting change, foundations and other actors must support efforts that employ a complementary set of charitable (501(c)(3)) and political (501(c)(4)) strategies.

Next, PICO National Network’s Kristee Paschall shares “How Integrated Voter Engagement Builds Power and Changes Policy.” Paschall offers two case studies from local PICO federations in Indiana and New Mexico that show how year-round voter engagement and community organizing can achieve success on key issues like criminal justice reform and living wage, and even help prepare leaders for public office.

In “Democracy Is the Best Theory of Change,” elections expert and political leader Steve Phillips argues that instead of trying to change hearts and minds to foster democracy, progressive philanthropists should engage the already-existing voter blocs aligned with their beliefs. Phillips draws on data and analysis from his new book, *Brown is the New White: How the Demographic Revolution Has Created a New American Majority*.

Gara LaMarche, president of the Democracy Alliance and vice chair of NCRP’s Board of Directors, offers his insights in “Control, Disruption and Democracy: Philanthropy’s Role in Inclusive Civic Engagement,” a piece adapted from his keynote speech at last fall’s Funders Committee for Civic Participation conference.

Our Member Spotlight looks at the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, whose work with civic engagement contributed to the Supreme Court win for marriage equality.

The issue also contains information about recent publications and projects relevant to civic engagement.

As always, we hope *Responsive Philanthropy* is a useful resource for everyone in philanthropy. We are always looking for ways to improve; let us know how we’re doing at readers@ncrp.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to be 'AD', written in a cursive style.

Aaron Dorfman
Executive Director, NCRP