



CENTER FOR NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT
strong nonprofits build strong communities

Nonprofit Congress Update

On Monday, October 16, the nearly 400 delegates to the Nonprofit Congress National Meeting voted on the three Top Priorities of the nonprofit sector.

Through the National Town Hall reports, six Priorities emerged:

- Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness
- Advocacy and Grassroots Community Activities
- Nonprofit Collaboration
- Partnerships with Government and Business
- Public Awareness and Support of the Nonprofit Sector
- Social Change

Over the last several months, Town Hall meetings were held in Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, Midland, San Antonio, Wichita Falls and Tyler. In all, 117 Town Hall meetings were held across the country. Delegates to the National Meeting represented 47 states and the District of Columbia. Each state delegation identified specific actions to address the national priorities.

The Congress' initial charge was: (1) Identifying the values that all nonprofits share; (2) Developing a vision and priorities for the nonprofit sector; and (3) Exercising a collective voice.

We want to thank the 217 Town Hall attendees that participated and enriched our 3 Town Hall meetings. You provided us with real and substantive messages to convey and discuss in Washington.



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After discussion and a voting process by National Delegates, the Top Three Priorities were identified as follows:

1. Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness

A priority of the nonprofit sector is to ensure that the sector has the resources it needs to serve communities and is effectively and efficiently managed.

Key Focus:

- **Accountability and Best Practices** - The nonprofit sector is accountable, responsive, and operates efficiently and is accountable to its clients and donors.
- **Leadership** - The nonprofit sector has effective and strong leadership with a focus on mission.

2. Advocacy and Grassroots Community Activities

A priority of the nonprofit sector is to advocate for the sector at large and engage our constituents to solve problems at the grassroots level.

3. Public Awareness and Support of the Sector

A priority of the nonprofit sector is to increase public understanding and support so that nonprofits can continue to do their best work.

For two intense and exhilarating days, we joined fellow leaders from throughout the United States, channeling our ideas, experiences, passion and energy into a collective agenda intended to guide our sector in the coming years. We left Washington, DC with a collective commitment to take concrete steps to assertively educate the public as well as the commercial and governmental sectors on the unique, indispensable and equal role of the nonprofit sector in our communities, states, and nation.

“The delegates chose their priorities and began to develop the tactics to get us there,” said Audrey R. Alvarado, Ph.D., executive director of the National Council of Nonprofit Associations and project director of the Nonprofit Congress. “We will



continue to do our part to support and connect nonprofits at the state and local level.”

More than 1000 individuals completed the Voicing Our Values: A Survey of the Guiding Principles of the Nonprofit Sector.

The Nonprofit Congress Guiding Principles were:

- Catalyst for Change and Innovation
- Commitment to Serve Others
- Dedication to the Betterment of the Communities We Serve
- Ethics & Integrity
- Promotion of Civic Engagement & Volunteerism
- Respect for Individuals & Groups
- Sustainers of Hope

Our deliberations and debates, and the voting of all Congress delegates, resulted in a consensus that our sector must harness and focus our energy on promoting the important role nonprofits play in our community, as well as our economy; building a positive image about the nonprofit sector from a “tin cup” perception to one of making investments in people and the community; and that we are accountable, professionally managed, maximize our resources and operate strategically. We must move beyond a notion that an effective nonprofit organization is defined as holding administrative costs below 10 percent.

Many of us came to appreciate the serious limitations of our language. We speak of ourselves as being part of “the Nonprofit Sector”, rather than defining ourselves in terms of our unique values and true contribution we make to our country, we do so in the limited context of our tax exempt status. Neither reflects our fundamental commitment to serving the public interest and commitment to a decent quality of life for all within America.



Programming at the National Meeting included a series of educational sessions focusing on advocacy, technology, leadership, and other key areas. Delegates spent most of our time in working sessions, deliberating on the priorities and creating action plans for the sector.

The Nonprofit Congress is a national movement to connect nonprofits to each other and help charitable organizations be proactive and empowered to make impact at the state level. State associations of nonprofits will play a critical role in this process.

The Texas Delegation is working to pull together our action plan, dividing roles and responsibilities among leading regional and state nonprofit organizations and working out strategies to support advancing our collective commitment to our clients, our community and ourselves.

The next Nonprofit Congress meeting will be held in spring 2008 and will be an opportunity to celebrate success toward the priorities. To learn more about the Nonprofit Congress movement and get involved, visit www.nonprofitcongress.org and read *Voices from the Field: National Meeting Briefing Book*.

The Nonprofit Congress is an unprecedented effort to unite nonprofits and strengthen the charitable sector. In the best spirit of democracy, the Nonprofit Congress is bringing together nonprofits from across the country to: identify the values that all nonprofits share; develop a vision and priorities for the nonprofit sector; and exercise a collective voice. The effort has received funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Alliance of Nonprofits, Risk Retention Group, and the Nonprofits' Insurance Alliance of California.

