

Recent Comments About the Arts Community

- “When millions of people are dying of AIDS and malaria in Africa, it is hard to justify the umpteenth society gala held for the benefit of a performing arts center or an art museum.”
 - Investor William Goss, *New York Times*, September 6, 2007
- Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-CA) “had reservations about whether donations to institutions such as art museums and universities should be given the same tax treatment as contributions to social service charities that help poor people.”
 - *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, October 4, 2007



INDEPENDENT SECTOR

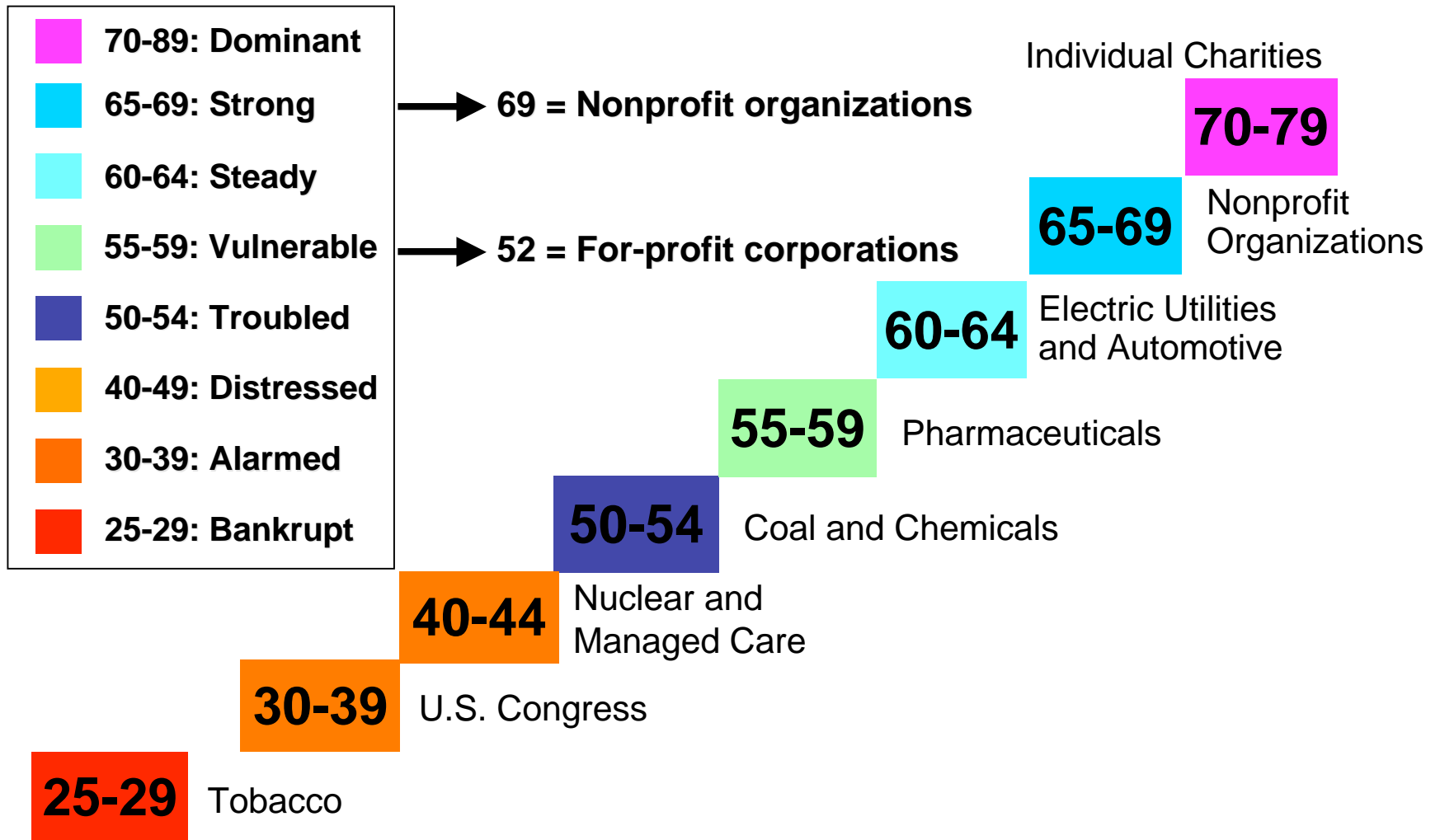
A vital voice for us all

Communicating the Value of the Nonprofit Community

National Performing Arts Convention

June 12, 2008

Public: Nonprofit and Industry Favorability

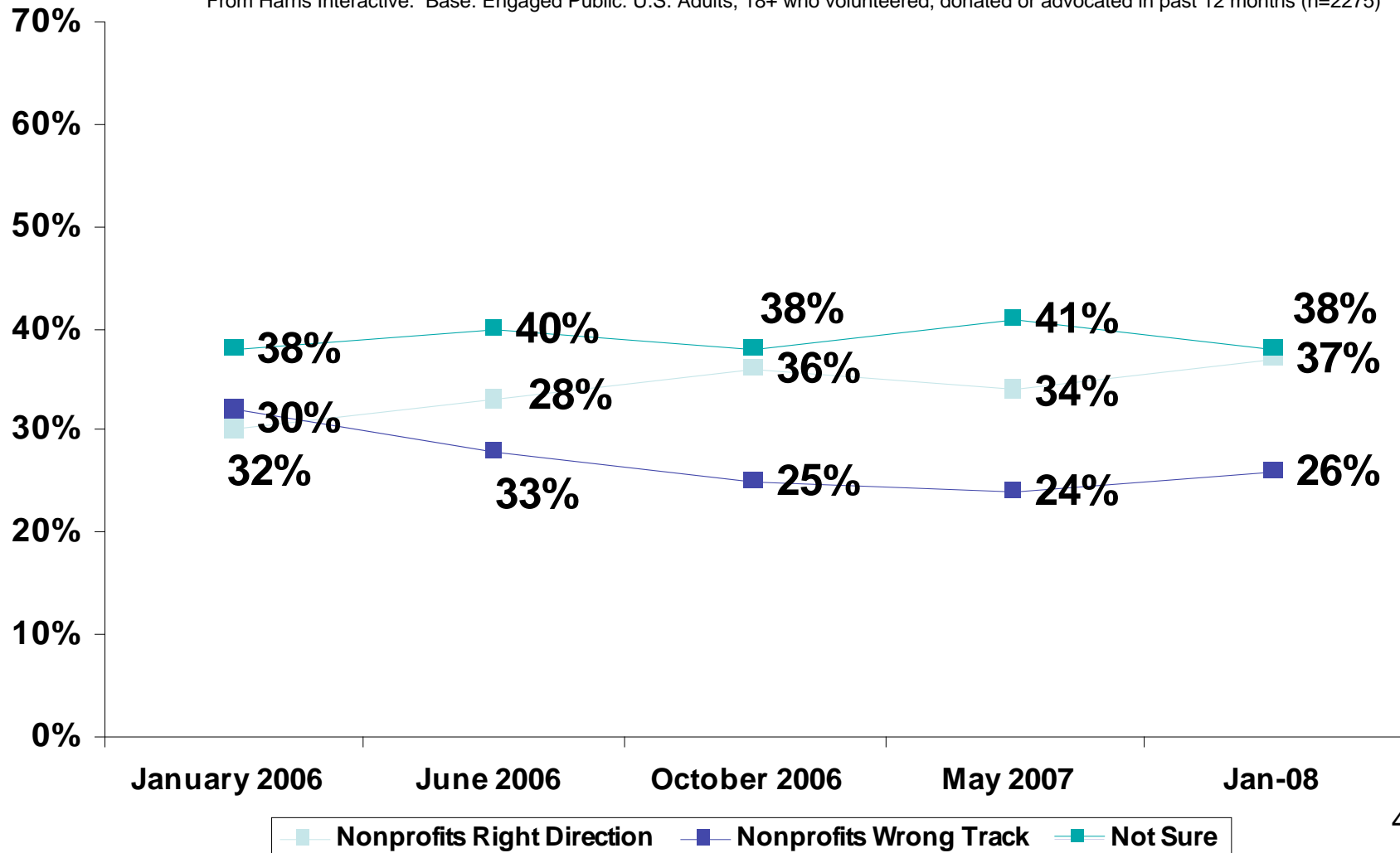


I want you to rate your overall feelings of some different types of organizations from 1 to 100. 1 means you have very negative or cold feelings for that type of organization and 100 means you have very positive feelings for that type of organization. Source: Harris Interactive

Public: Right Direction vs. Wrong Track

In general, do you think the nonprofit sector in America is on the right track, or has pretty seriously gotten off in the wrong direction?

From Harris Interactive. Base: Engaged Public: U.S. Adults, 18+ who volunteered, donated or advocated in past 12 months (n=2275)



Finding an Adaptable Message Framework

- **Goal:** ensuring that key decision makers support the nonprofit community in its work to improve people's lives and benefit communities across the country and around the world.
- **Target audience:** a narrow one of policymakers, media, and other influentials.
- **Approach:** a research-based message framework that could be adapted for diverse causes to help intensify support for the nonprofit community
- **Strategy:** IS helps organizations adapt the message framework to their specific needs through pilots project and through ongoing dissemination of research and application.

Research Basis for Initiative

Knowledge Development

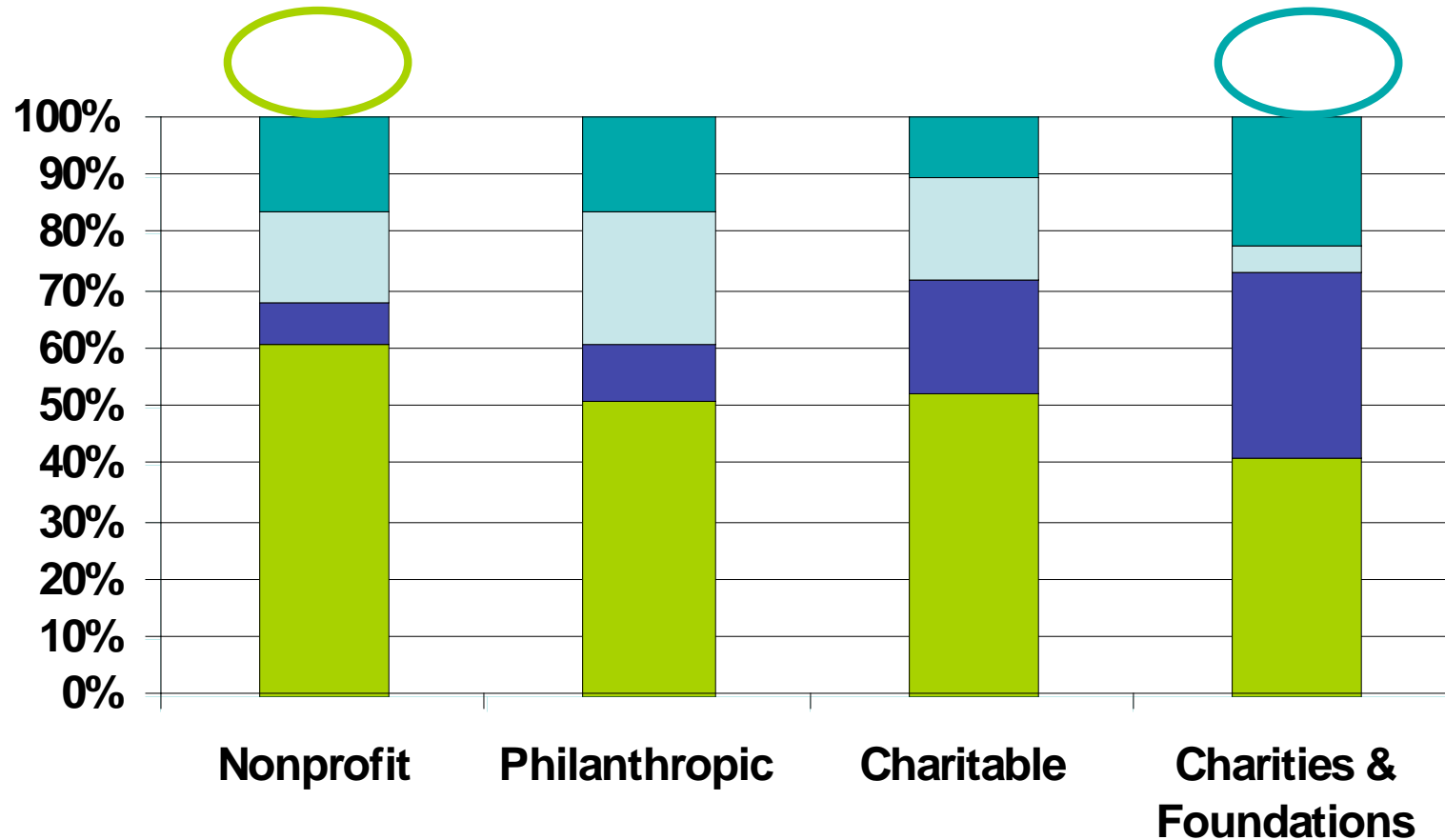
- 2005 Meta-review of past Harris Interactive sector research
- 2005 Focus groups with community leaders
- 2005 Individual interviews with seven national civic leaders
- 2005 Telephone survey of 150 Congressional offices
- 2005-06 Surveys of engaged public and general public
- 2006 Public Agenda survey

Message Exploration

- September 2006 DC Influential Bulletin Board session (Qualitative)
- October 2006 Surveys of Engaged and General Publics (Quantitative)

(subsequent research indicates these findings still valid)

Engaged Public: Perceptions of Names



■ Positive
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Unsure
 ■ Negative

+ Help community
 + No profit motive
 - Scam/Tax shelter

+ Giving back
 + Giving time/money
 - Wealthy tax break

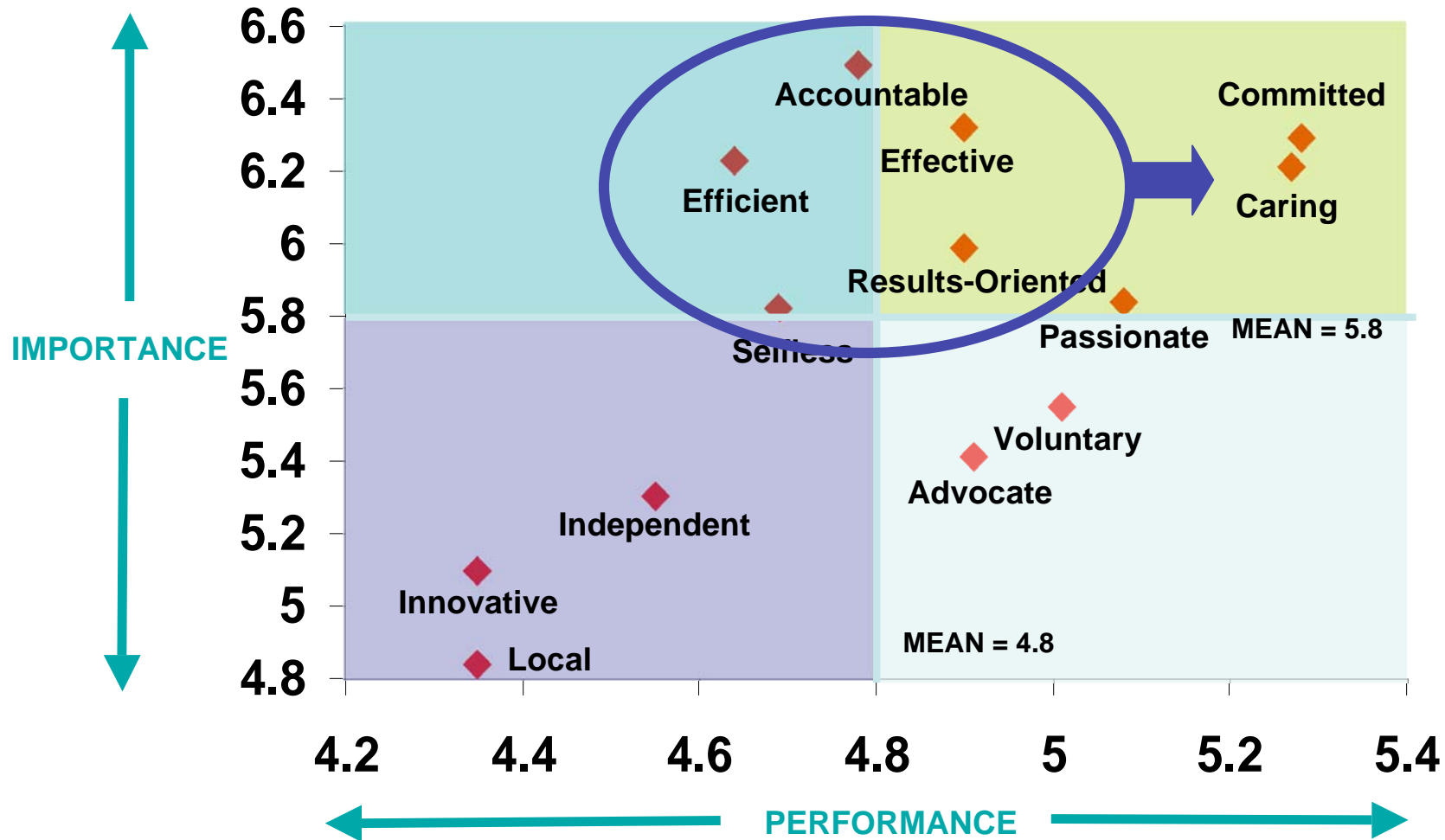
+ Donations
 + Help needy
 - Handouts/rip-off

+ Help needy
 - Fraud / Overhead
 - Solicitation

We Are the Nonprofit Community

- Nonprofit is positive
- Emphasizes diversity and common purpose
- Community: where we work and what we try to create

Valued Traits for Nonprofits



Oct 2006: 2,159 volunteers/donors. Mean ratings on a 1-7 scale

Details of Framework: Unselfishness

- **Cynicism:** policymakers and donors are questioning whether nonprofits are in it for more money and influence
- **It's not about us:** it's about others: the people who join with us, the people we serve, the results we achieve together
- **When we ask:** we do not ask for the organization, but for those we represent

Details of Framework: Accountability

- **Accountability is more than accounting for how money is spent:** nonprofits are accountable for financial integrity, efficiency and producing results
- **True accountability is:** transparency, communication, and the efficient delivery of results
- **Communicating accountability:** is about gaining trust, not about reporting numbers
- **Be accountable on a rational and emotional level:** combine facts and figures with values and storytelling

Keys to Effective Communications

- **Illustrate the key values:** caring, committed, unselfish, efficient, effective, results-oriented, accountable
- **Tone:** elevated, high-minded language fails with all audiences—mix facts with emotional statements, be specific and speak in plain English; nonprofits may do big work, but we must talk realistically about what we do and have done
- **Importance of all three sectors:** do not denigrate government or business—they play important roles and so do we
- **Offer collaboration and solutions:** not just complaints
- **Move from inputs to outcomes:** Stories can demonstrate results

Example: Before the Framework

- “On behalf of Independent Sector, I am writing to urge you to oppose permanent repeal or irresponsible reform of the estate tax, and instead to support estate tax reform that preserves incentives for charitable giving and retains significant revenue for the federal treasury. Full repeal or irresponsible reform would harm tens of thousands of charities and their capacity to serve through the likely loss of charitable donations, while benefiting only a very small number of estates.”

Example: Applying the Framework

- “Permanent repeal or irresponsible reform of the estate tax would benefit the few at the expense of the many. Repealing the estate tax would seriously damage the power of hundreds of thousands of individuals who work with the nonprofit community to improve the public good through charitable contributions, volunteering and advocacy. The solution is to protect small business owners while also ensuring adequate federal revenues and encouraging charitable contributions that help nonprofits implement, complement and enhance services provided by government and business. I urge you to protect individual legacies while safeguarding the legacy of a better future for all.”

What Would Success Look Like?

Success could mean:

- **Government officials** would have a better understanding of the scope of the nonprofit community.
- **Government would view charities and foundations as partners** in problem solving and improving communities.
- **Nonprofit organizations would help shape legislation**, and damaging policies would be avoided.
- **Confidence in nonprofit organizations** among key audiences would increase.
- **Stronger relationships with media** would allow a more balanced picture in media coverage.
- **Individual charities and foundations organizations would view themselves** as part of a larger, diverse, valuable, and powerful nonprofit community.

For More Information

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