



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 22, 2010

Contact: Monica Wroblewski
Phone: 703-879-0678
wrobm@cof.org

Foundations to Congress: Collaboration Vital to Addressing America's Challenges
Philanthropic Leaders Meet to Align Efforts, Seek Policy Changes, and Strengthen Impact

WASHINGTON, DC—More than 200 philanthropic leaders, foundation executives, and staff from 33 states and the District of Columbia convened in Washington, D.C., last week for the eighth annual Foundations on the Hill (FOTH). Co-sponsored by the Council on Foundations and the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers, the two-day event provided a platform for grantmakers to raise awareness about their philanthropic efforts and to emphasize foundations as collaborative partners and resources for informing policy solutions.

“The philanthropic community is often at the center of fostering innovation and driving real solutions to improve the lives of families in our communities and throughout the world,” said Steve Gunderson, president and CEO of the Council on Foundations. “While foundations are not a financial solution to the budgetary challenges facing state and federal governments, we are committed to working with members of Congress and all of our partners to make sure we have the right policies to strengthen our impact even more.”

FOTH (March 16-17) included policy forums and face-to-face meetings with congressional members and staff to help identify ways they can work collaboratively to help remove barriers and foster charitable giving to ensure that grantmakers and foundations can more effectively invest and allocate their resources to meet the needs of their communities. The Council and Forum also recognized Congressman Sander Levin (D-MI) and Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME) with the annual Honorary Friends of Philanthropy Award for their stewardship and commitment to help grow and promote philanthropy.

“This year’s event really highlighted the usefulness of better collaboration and coordination of legislative efforts within the philanthropic sector and the important role philanthropy can play in helping address the major challenges facing our nation,” said Michael Litz, president and CEO

-MORE-

of the Forum. “Combining the national expertise of the Council with the on-the-ground state and local perspectives and connections of regional associations was a key factor in the success of this year’s joint effort.”

Here are some participant highlights from the FOTH meetings:

- Staff from **The Joyce Foundation** (Chicago) explained in their meetings that concerns about the burgeoning federal deficit was striking across the board in both Democratic and Republican offices. The staff also had a number of encouraging conversations about the proposal to simplify the excise tax on foundations’ investments, a move that would be revenue neutral. The Joyce Foundation staff also learned that participating in FOTH provided the opportunity to make members of Congress and their staffs aware of the Joyce Foundation and some of the foundation’s major grant programs.
- Representatives from the **Conference of Southwest Foundations** found that much of their conversations focused on the value of philanthropy, the impact grantmaking foundations have on constituents, and the benefits of flattening the excise tax.
- A participant from the **Dade Community Foundation** described the impact that the foundation was having in the districts represented by the participant’s congressional delegation. He also was able to offer himself as a resource for assisting nonprofits located in the represented areas, which helped highlight some of the ways they could be of help to their representatives back home.
- A seven-person delegation from the **Indiana Grantmakers Alliance**, which included executive directors from four community foundations and one private foundation, made visits to the offices of 10 of Indiana’s 11 members of Congress. Delegation members found that FOTH provided them with the opportunity to educate Congressional staffers and share stories about the impact grantmakers are having on communities.

Editors’ note: To learn if a grantmaking organization in your area participated in FOTH, please contact Monica Wroblewski at wrobm@cof.org or 703.879.0678.

###

The Council on Foundations

The Council on Foundations, formed in 1949, is a nonprofit membership association of grantmaking foundations and corporations. Members of the Council include approximately 2,000 independent, operating, community, public and company-sponsored foundations and corporate giving programs in the United States and abroad. The assets of Council members total more than \$307 billion. The Council’s mission is to provide the opportunity, leadership, and tools needed by philanthropic organizations to expand, enhance, and sustain their ability to advance the common good. For more information, visit the Council’s Web site at www.cof.org.

The Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers

The Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers (the Forum) is a national philanthropic leader and a network of 32 regional associations of grantmakers. The mission of the Forum network is to connect and support regional associations -- in ways that expand their capacity to lead, add value to their members, and strengthen philanthropy in their regions -- and to bring the knowledge and experience of the regional associations into the national conversation on philanthropy. Please visit our Web site at www.givingforum.org for more information.