



CENTER FOR PUBLIC & NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP

*ISSUES FORUM*

NONPROFIT VOTER ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES:  
EXPANDING THE ELECTORATE, INSPIRING  
PARTICIPATION

MAY 1, 2006  
Georgetown University  
Washington, DC

## **PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES**

### *MODERATOR*

**NAN ARON** is the founder and president of the Alliance for Justice, a national association of public interest and civil rights organizations that advances the cause of justice for all Americans, strengthens the public interest community's influence on national policy and fosters the next generation of advocates. The association promotes greater nonprofit and foundation participation in public life through workshops, technical assistance and publications about lobbying, ballot measures and election activities. Nan also developed Co/Motion and Student Action, a training program that educates and inspires students to engage in social justice activism. Prior to founding the Alliance, Nan was a staff attorney for the ACLU's National Prison Project and a trial attorney for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. She has a BA from Oberlin College and a JD from Case Western Reserve.

### *PANELISTS*

**MARCIA AVNER** is a senior training consultant to the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest and also serves as the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits' public policy director. She lobbies nonprofit sector legislative issues and supports nonprofit involvement in public policy work with media trainings, issue briefings and skill building workshops. Her other professional experience ranges from serving as executive director of the Minnesota Project, a rural community development organization, to serving as communications director for U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone. She is author of *The Lobbying and Advocacy Handbook for Nonprofit Organizations* and *The Nonprofit Board Member's Guide to Lobbying and Advocacy*. She holds a BA from Carnegie Mellon University, an MA from the University of Arkansas, and is a PhD candidate at the University of Minnesota.

**DEEPAK BHARGAVA** serves as executive director of the Center for Community Change, an advocacy and nonprofit think tank that works in partnership with low-income communities for social change. Deepak previously served as the Center's director of public policy, in which he led the Center's National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support, a coalition of grassroots groups established in 2000 to give low-income people a voice in the reauthorization of the federal welfare law and other areas critical to poor people. Prior to joining the Center, Deepak was the legislative director at ACORN, where he gained broad experience in community reinvestment and housing finance issues. Born in Mysore, India, Deepak grew up in New York City and graduated summa cum laude from Harvard University.

**GERI MANNION** serves as chair of Carnegie Corporation's Strengthening U.S. Democracy Program, which supports projects that increase civic engagement and strengthen the capacity of nonprofit organizations. Before joining Carnegie Corporation, Geri worked on various projects regarding international relations and philanthropy at the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation. Geri also co-chairs the Funders Committee for Civic Participation, an affinity group of funders that encourages foundations to fund voter registration, voting rights, civic education and campaign finance reform. Mannion holds a BA in English and an MA in political science both from Fordham University.

*RESOURCES*

Resources referenced in this transcript include:

Alliance for Justice	<a href="http://www.afj.org">www.afj.org</a>
Minnesota Council of Nonprofits	<a href="http://www.mncn.org">www.mncn.org</a>
Center for Community Change	<a href="http://www.communitychange.org">www.communitychange.org</a>
Carnegie Corporation	<a href="http://www.carnegie.org">www.carnegie.org</a>
Grassroots Solutions	<a href="http://www.grassrootsolutions.com">www.grassrootsolutions.com</a>
Wellstone Action	<a href="http://www.wellstone.org">www.wellstone.org</a>
NAACP Voter Fund	<a href="http://www.naacpnvf.org">www.naacpnvf.org</a>
Project Vote	<a href="http://www.projectvote.org">www.projectvote.org</a>
The League of Conservation Voters	<a href="http://www.llcv.org">www.llcv.org</a>
Minnesota Environmental Initiative	<a href="http://www.mn-ei.org">www.mn-ei.org</a>
NPAction	<a href="http://www.npaction.org">www.npaction.org</a>
Project Vote Smart	<a href="http://www.vote-smart.org">www.vote-smart.org</a>
League of Women Voters	<a href="http://www.lwv.org">www.lwv.org</a>
The Library of Congress/THOMAS	<a href="http://www.thomas.loc.gov">www.thomas.loc.gov</a>
Voter Engagement Evaluation Project	<a href="http://www.proteusfund.org">www.proteusfund.org</a>
New Americans Vote	<a href="http://www.gcir.org">www.gcir.org</a>
Voter Registration, Education, and Ballot Campaigns: A Funders' Guide to Legal Issues,	<a href="http://www.gcir.org">www.gcir.org</a>

## INTRODUCTION

*Los Angeles, May 1 – Hundreds of thousands of immigrants and their supporters skipped work, school and shopping on Monday and marched in dozens of cities from coast to coast. ... Originally billed as a nationwide economic boycott under the banner "Day Without an Immigrant," the day evolved into a sweeping round of protests intended to influence the debate in Congress over granting legal status to all or most of the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants in the country.*

The New York Times, May 2, 2006

The timing, though coincidental, was impossible to ignore: as hundreds of thousands of immigrants and supporters of immigrant rights marched in cities across America, students, citizens and nonprofit leaders from throughout the eastern United States gathered at Georgetown University to discuss nonprofit voter engagement initiatives in a forum entitled “Expanding the Electorate, Inspiring Participation.”

The forum – the sixth in the Issues Forum Series presented by Georgetown’s Center for Public and Nonprofit Leadership – originally was conceived to stimulate the thinking of nonprofits that may wish to engage in voter engagement activities with an eye toward the fall 2006 elections or, more far-reaching, the 2008 elections. Informed public participation in the electoral process is, after all, essential to our nation’s democracy.

Little did we know that, as we talked theory and models for action, real-life implementation would be playing out across town and across the nation.

The Forum speakers brought a wealth of experience in voter registration, voter education and voter mobilization – important lessons for our audience, which included not only students but leaders of dozens of nonprofit organizations engaged in everything from environmental issues to prisoner rehabilitation.

For some, the connection between nonprofits and voter engagement may not be so obvious. In fact, nonprofit organizations – particularly those that provide direct services to clients – have special relationships with their constituencies. Consequently, nonprofits are in a position to engage citizens in a very personal and powerful way and encourage them to participate in the electoral process.

Our presenters – Nan Aron, president of the Alliance for Justice; Marcia Avner, public policy director of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits; Deepak Bhargava, executive director of the Center for Community change; and Geri Mannion, chair of the Strengthening U.S. Democracy Project at Carnegie Corporation – offered a wealth of examples of nonprofits doing excellent work in this area, important lessons learned and useful tools for organizations wishing to enter the field.

Inevitably, the conversation came around to the demonstrations playing out that day, and that had played out in the weeks preceding. And as Bhargava pointed out, those demonstrations were evidence of the effectiveness of nonprofit citizen engagement efforts.

“Over the last three months or so, best as we can tell, there have been about 3 million people who have taken to the streets in one rally or demonstration or another,” said Bhargava. “And that is, according to some observers, the largest size mobilization in the history of the United States.... [T]his took a lot of people by surprise. How did so many people all of a sudden show up at the same place in the same time to demand their rights?”

“[I]t was not a spontaneous mobilization. It was built on the pillars of immigrant organizations, hometown associations, ethnic media, churches, a whole set of community institutions that have been, over the course of a number of years, developing leaders, training leaders, and becoming citizens in a true sense of the word, becoming citizens as participants in our democracy, and building organizations that could provide the foundation for mobilization.”

In other words, an enormous amount of everyday, grassroots work transpired over a considerable period of time to get the immigrant-support community to the point that it could effectively display its presence on a national stage.

Perhaps more importantly, Bhargava and other pointed out, the grassroots work was not solely focused on getting out the vote. People come together around an issue, and use the electoral process as a means of making their voice heard on that issue. Environmental issues, immigrant rights, felon re-enfranchisement – all have potential electoral components.

“Envision, if you will, a circle with advocacy and organizing in the middle and around the circle an ongoing circle of election activity and legislative advocacy,” said Marcia Avner. “We capture the interest of people around each of those.”

Indeed, encouraging more citizens to participate in the electoral process has multiple benefits – benefits that are intertwined. It empowers individuals to exercise their rights and responsibilities and it provides a mechanism for nonprofits to advance their mission. Empowering the voice of the mission is critical to creating change, says Bhargava.

“If we are to change conditions of poverty and race and the disadvantaged in this country, there is no way to get there without participation by the people who are most directly impacted by those problems,” he said. “We can write all of the studies we like, we can have all the conferences we like, we can do all the public policy work we like, but without direct serious ongoing participation by the people who are living with those problems we will not have the solutions, we will not have the power to change that storyline.”

**Kathy Postel Kretman**  
**Director**  
**Center for Public and Nonprofit Leadership**

*PROGRAM*

**KATHY KRETMAN:** Welcome, to all of you – those from here in Washington and those who have come from out of town. I especially want to thank our panel ,who have come today when there are so many other things going on in Washington. They are here to talk to you about something that we think is incredibly important for the nonprofit community both locally, nationally, and globally: How can we, as a nonprofit sector, get involved in civic engagement, the public policy process? In an election year, what can we do legally, and what can we do effectively, to engage ourselves, our communities, and others in the electoral process?

We were very intentional in choosing this particular issue for our forum discussion. We think it is very important. If you look at the front page of *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, the *Bethesda Gazette*, you see stories of what we, as a community of nonprofits, are doing, and how important and vital it is. – not just those who deliver social services but those who advocate. That is what this forum is about.

We also were intentional in choosing these panelists, because they represent the experts in the area of advocacy. They also bring different points of view. One can speak to activity at the state level. One can speak to national grass roots events. One represents the foundation perspective. I think it is important for us to know what foundations consider worthy of funding in this field.

Our moderator today is Nan Aron, the founder and president of the Alliance for Justice, a national association of public interest and civil rights organizations that advance the cause of justice for all Americans. I will ask Nan to introduce our panelists. Nan, thank you very much.

**NAN ARON:** I want to welcome you all here this afternoon, particularly with this gorgeous weather outside. I see these college students in the audience and commend them for being here, in class -- I think I know where I would have been! I also commend the work of Kathy and her colleague Pablo Eisenberg in this wonderful center and for having the wisdom to call us all together.

There is really no better time than now to talk about the role of nonprofits during an election year, to talk about the issue of voter participation and voter mobilization as nonprofit activists, and leaders, and staff. It is such a privilege to have these three individuals who will help lead us in this discussion.

We know how difficult it is to reach out and contact and influence our elected leaders. Most of the time, if your experiences are anything like mine, elected officials love to duck the tough questions we want to ask them. They often want to talk about everything except the issues that we raise. But elections present for us in the nonprofit community often the best opportunity we have to hold discussions with our elected leaders, with legislators, and to press our issues. It is those times, in those meetings and forums and events where they must look you in the eye and answer your question. We in the nonprofit community must take every opportunity, exploit every forum we can, to press our issues because, for us, it is often the only opportunity we have.

We are helped a lot by the fact that the Internal Revenue Service has actually given a green light to nonprofits around the country to get engaged in voter activities. Now, we all know that the IRS tells us, as nonprofits, that we cannot support or oppose a candidate for elected office. But the fact remains, there

is an awful lot that we can do during an election season. We can reach out to voters, reach out to politicians, and engage the community in focusing and having a discussion about our issues. To that, the IRS has said, "Come on in, the water is fine. Go do it."

Some of you may have read articles in the newspaper about the IRS stepping up its scrutiny of nonprofit organizations. The way many of those articles are written, you think that all nonprofits are culpable and getting into lots of trouble. It is important to remember that a very tiny number of organizations actually have gotten into trouble. The vast majority of nonprofits in this country are obeying the law. We need to be cognizant of what the rules and regulations are, but not deterred by them or intimidated by them. We must speak out, we must act, we must reach out, connect, and get hold of some of these politicians to get access to them.

If not us, who? It is often the case that if we do not get involved during an election season and get our points across, no one else is going to do it.

Politicians are looking for one thing and one thing only: To get re-elected. That means they must spend a lot of time talking to donors and raising money and going to fundraisers. It is up to us in the nonprofit community to make sure that we get our issues out there. It is those of us in this room who are largely responsible for doing work that improves the lot for all of us in this country, improves society. Let's make the most of it during this election season.

In addition to our speakers today, we are fortunate to have with us members from the Alliance for Justice, some of our lawyers: Liz Towne, Shannon Garrett, and Susan Hoechstetter. They are here to answer any technical questions you may have afterward.

Our first speaker is Marcia Avner, with the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits. Marcia Avner is a real force of nature and a tremendous leader in the state, a force for a wonderful change. Even though we in Washington think that inside the beltway we are the trendsetters, I should tell you that we often look to the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits to see what they are doing and to take advantage of their wisdom. As you know, the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits has a program called, "The Minnesota Participation Project," which encourages nonprofits to get involved in nonpartisan voter mobilization.

Our next speaker will be Deepak Bhargava. Deepak is one of the country's renowned activist and leaders. In fact, I am surprised to see Deepak here. I think it speaks to his commitment that he is meeting with us today, because he and his organization, the Center for Community Change, have been national leaders in this effort to galvanize immigrant rights organizations around the country. We are very pleased to have Deepak here.

Last, but certainly not least, is Geri Mannion who is with the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Geri is a longtime leader and voice for advocacy and activism in the philanthropic community. Whenever you see foundations do good things and supporting good advocacy efforts, usually you know that Geri has had a hand in making that happen.

We lead off with Marcia Avner.

**MARCIA AVNER:** Thank you. It is a joy to be here. I really welcome the opportunity to talk about 501(c)(3)s and voter engagement. I'll do it from the state perspective, by trying to talk very fast and

tell you the story of what we did in '04 and '05 and what we have done thus far in '06. And I invite lots of questions.

People have said the 501(c)(3) sector is the sleeping giant. We are the organizations that have trusting, ongoing relationships with the very people who are not voting regularly or not voting at all. They are the clients we serve. They are often volunteers who work with our organizations. They are the people who struggle with disabilities, with language barriers, or simply with poverty, with communities and lives that are in some degree of turmoil. And we work with them on an ongoing basis.

We were very fortunate at the Council of Nonprofits. In the fall of 2003, we had sketched out a page-and-a-half of a plan to encourage nonprofits to register voters, to engage voters, to educate candidates, to educate voters about the candidates, and to do GOTV work – Get Out The Vote. We coincided with the growing national recognition on the part of funders and individual philanthropists about the importance of this work.

We were able to take our plan, work with the national infrastructure group called National Voice, which only lasted for one year, and develop plans to engage more than 300 nonprofits and more than 1,000 people in voter mobilization work. And this is how we did it.

We first began by convening a C3 table. We worked with the groups that we are doing advocacy work with us already and sent out one more e-mail saying, “We would like to convene a table of C3 organizations to talk about voter mobilization.” Our conference room holds 25 people comfortably and 56 showed up. We thought we might be on to something.

With the help of Grassroots Solutions, which was the consulting firm with whom we worked, we designed a way to do organizing at its best: that is to tap into people who are already in the community, train *them* as well as provide our own trainings, so that nonprofits would understand the importance of and the strategies and tactics for voter engagement, voter education, and get out the vote work. We wanted to build capacity in a nonprofit sector to do this on an ongoing basis.

We all know that in 2004, it was a wild time. Everyone was cognizant of the election. There was an opportunity there to step up to the plate and say, “If you have never voted before, this is how you can register and this is your polling place.” But we wanted to do this for the long term because it rose out of a deep commitment to people having a voice in the decisions and the issues that affect their lives. And so we seized the moment.

There was a small amount, but an important amount, of funding available. People were thinking about elections and nonprofits, and once we convinced them that it is indeed legal to do nonpartisan and nonprofit voter engagement work, they wanted to do it. Our model was: Voter Turnout Is Key. But building capacity for the long term was an even deeper part of the strategy.

With Grassroots Solutions, we developed very accessible tool kits. Everything from a planning tool, to GOTV tools, to a bag, November 2 tee shirts and bumper stickers and lots of schtick that would get people’s attention.

We trained people to start close to home. Start with your own office, your staff, your board, your volunteers, and the clients you serve. And in our state, we have a very interesting state statute. If you

receive a state grant or a federal grant that passes through the state, you are required to register your clients to vote. We knew that for years, part of intake has been voter registration. We also were convinced that those cards went in somebody's human services file and never got to the Secretary of State.

Tapping the right moment, understanding that this is long-term work, and working with the strategy of training trainers has served us well. But I'm proudest of the story behind this story. We made a commitment to go to people who are budding leaders, established leaders in the immigrant communities and communities of color, to bring them in as trainers and to use our resources in the community. We paid each of our trainers \$125 to do a training. We now have 55 trainers who are bilingual, English and Somali, English and Mong - a hybrid language which is emerged in as Monglish - Spanish and English, we have sign language interpreters, and we have one deaf/blind interpreter. This is a cadre that works hard to understand everything from the law to how to work with the voter file to how to be sure that we are giving people adequate information about how to be genuinely nonpartisan.

We are also committed to moving into rural places and so we are leveraging our connections around advocacy issues in greater Minnesota. (We are not allowed to call it "rural" in our state. It is "greater" Minnesota, the presumption being that the twin cities must be "lesser" Minnesota.) But we go into the greater part of a very large state and we leverage the excitement that people have around issues to convene them around being trained and engaging in election activity. This has proven to be more important than we expected it to be.

We learned during the door knocking, talking to people as they left the polls, working with election protection that potential voters who have never experienced voting before are very hesitant to embarrass themselves by not knowing how the system works, by not knowing who the candidates are, and by not understanding what their rights are. Our ability to get people to the polls was really important, and to make sure that we have election-protection resources at polling places in communities and neighborhoods that we knew might be experiencing some intimidating forces, some forms of challenge at the polls.

I like to think about it from my own perspective. I got really tired of all the phone calls that were about "vote for me," "vote for me," "vote for me," "vote for me." It was a huge relief to people to have us come to the door, or talk in a meeting, or gather them together for cake and talk about *them*. "This is about you. This is about you as a potential voter. This is your opportunity to make your community count." People are shocked when you tell them: "If you are tired of your state legislature never fixing your school and never fixing your roads, and never putting any money into your community centers, you need to know it is because they know that voter turnout in your precinct is just 20 percent. And when you get up to 60 percent, they are going to pay a lot of attention to you."

We put together multiple nonprofits, so that we had the NAACP, and the YW, and the League of Women Voters, and Somali Action, and the Council of Nonprofits co-hosting over 100 varieties of groups. When we had 100 organizations clustering together to do candidate forums and candidate meetings, candidates showed up for those. That was important to them. That was critical mass.

Using the train to trainer approach, getting the people the tools that they need in very manageable increments, and taking the pressure out of the message really helped. We did not harass anybody. We made it about them. We made it a celebration. And we made it accessible in their language.

This year we did about 80 precinct caucus trainings. We are still a precinct caucus state and our caucuses were in March and we did them with all of our materials in four languages. All of the materials are available on our website and please use them ([www.mncn.org/mpp/index.htm](http://www.mncn.org/mpp/index.htm)). Steal freely.

We are nearing the end of my time, so I'm going to plant a couple of questions:

Please ask me about the Nonprofit Voter Engagement Network, which is the beginning of a wonderful national infrastructure coordinating effort.

And please ask me about me about the 501(c)(3) training that Wellstone Action is doing across the country that you might be able to tap into.

**DEEPAK BHARGAVA:** Good afternoon, everyone. Good afternoon. I'm going to start by talking a little bit about how the Center for Community Change came to electoral politics, why we decided that it was important.

In 2002, I developed a close relationship with a senator, whom I will not name, who had been terrible on issues related to poverty and particularly on issues related to welfare for a number of years. He is a Democratic center. Over the course of the year, after a lot of great grassroots advocacy in other efforts, he turned around on those issues and consistently, resolutely voted the right way when this bill came up for reauthorization.

After the session was over and the bill eventually did not pass, I did a little debrief with the senator. I asked him what made a difference. (I presumed that what might make the difference was the fact that I was so charming and smart – turned out that was not it.) I said, “Was it the research about the impact of welfare reform nationally in your state, was it these volumes of studies that foundations have funded to show what happened?” and he said he had not read a single one of them. So I said, “Well, what did it? What turned you around? Why did you come to see the light?”

He said it was because he was highly conscious that the organizations that were pushing for just welfare reform in his home state – women’s organizations, low-income organizations, native organizations, and others, that were part of this coalition we put together – were also doing nonpartisan voter mobilization every day. It was highly visible in the newspaper, on the reservations, and he saw it. He saw it firsthand. This may not be a pretty conclusion to draw, but the conclusion is that policy without politics is highly ineffective.

On a national scale, only about one-third of poor people in this country vote and about two-thirds of affluent people vote. Now one solution to the problem would be to stop wealthy people and white people from voting. I do not think that is likely or possible. So the question for us is, how do we consistently drive up civic participation and voting among low-income people and people of color? That is the problem we were trying to solve.

In 2004, we piloted a new program at CCC that builds on our work and is just called “The Community Voting Project.”

In the project we worked with about 53 grassroots community organizations that do community organizing in neighborhoods or churches, on reservations, through service agencies with a whole variety

of constituencies. We work with them to provide technical systems training, financial support, media assistance and communication support to develop rigorous voter mobilization strategies that would work with the constituencies that they were organizing.

The principles of this approach were:

First, that repeated person-to-person contact is critical in increasing turnout. People are increasingly impervious to the usual kind of parachute-in-someone- you-never-met-before-in-your-life, who tells you this is the most important election of your life and then disappears after election day. People are impervious to rebel calls. The thing that matters is authentic contact by people who live in the community that is being targeted.

Second, target particularly geographies, precinct targeting.

Third, set measurable goals for voter registration and for voter contacts, so you can actually measure whether progress was being made.

Fourth, the voter program needs to be tied to the overall goals of the organization. So if it is an organization that is working on immigrant rights, obviously it not only needs to focus on immigrant populations, but also to incorporate key messages about immigration and immigration issues that matter to that constituency.

And then, finally, the project has to be viewed as permanent campaign, so the goal for nonpartisan voter mobilization work is not to elect candidates. It is to increase turnout and to bring people into the life of community organizations so that they can become active members after Election Day and pursue the issues that they care about.

The overall results of the program are that the organizations that we work with mobilized about 500,000 new and infrequent low-income voters of color. Probably more importantly, turnout in the precincts that were targeted increased by five to seven percent over precincts that were not targeted by these organizations, which by field standards is a remarkable accomplishment.

But some of the more profound transformations happened after the election.

A rural committee organization working with African-Americans in Mexico, Missouri, did a substantial voter registration and mobilization effort in manufactured housing. Soon after election day, the newspaper publishes a front page story totaling how many people they have moved to the polls. The next day, the state representative from their area showed up at their offices and, suddenly, he would like to talk with them about this legislation that he had battled up in the state legislature for the last five years regarding tenant's rights and mobile home parks. Now, he said, he wanted to do it because he finally saw it was the right thing to do. The leaders of that organization had a sneaking suspicion that it had something to do with the perception that people in his district were actually participating in the process.

Another example would be an organization in Illinois called the Illinois Coalition for Immigration and Refugee Rights, which mobilized about 35,000 new and infrequent voters in 2004. Their efforts resulted in an event this February with more than 5,000 people, many of whom were engaged for the first time in 2004 as volunteers or as new voters, with the governor present who announced the new policy on

immigrant integration and immigrant rights for the state of Illinois. He directly attributed what he is doing to all the civic participation that happened in immigrant communities. That clearly would not have happened without serious work on voter mobilization.

One final example: we organized a presidential debate in South Carolina just before the South Carolina primary, where 3,000 low-income people from the southern region mostly came for a dialogue with the presidential candidates. Six of the eight presidential candidates showed up. And during this forum, poor people themselves directly asked questions of the candidates about health care education, criminal justice, and immigration, and so on. It is the first time in my memory that I can remember presidential candidates being asked unscripted questions by constituents about the issues they cared most deeply about.

If we are to change conditions of poverty and race and the disadvantaged in this country, there is no way to get there without participation by the people who are most directly impacted by those problems. We can write all of the studies we like, we can have all the conferences we like, we can do all the public policy work we like, but without direct serious ongoing participation by the people who are living with those problems we will not have the solutions, we will not have the power to change that storyline.

The challenge for nonprofit organizations is how to mobilize some of the core assets that they have, which is trust in the community, a knowledge of community needs and the issues that resonate, and a commitment to being there after election day to engage low-income people and people of color in ongoing mobilization process. I think that challenges many nonprofits not just to involve people in elections, but to actually give people a voice in their organizations, in the setting of public policy agendas to really create democratic space. While it is true that many nonprofits do that, it is also the case that many nonprofits do not. Civic participation cannot be grafted on as a kind of ancillary program to what organizations do. It really needs to be transformative of the organizations if it is going to work.

A final word about these immigrant mobilizations, which is where I should be right now, today, but I'm not.

Over the last three months or so, best as we can tell, there have been about 3,000,000 people who have taken to the streets in one rally or demonstration or another. And that is, according to some observers, the largest size mobilization in the history of the United States. I do not know whether that is true, but it certainly is fairly substantial. And this took a lot of people by surprise. How did so many people all of a sudden show up at the same place in the same time to demand their rights?

Well, the real story is it was not a spontaneous mobilization. It was built on the pillars of immigrant organizations, hometown associations, ethnic media, churches, a whole set of community institutions that have been, over the course of a number of years, developing leaders, training leaders, and becoming citizens in a true sense of the word, becoming citizens as participants in our democracy, and building organizations that could provide the foundation for mobilization.

So when the bad bill came out of the House, there was an apparatus that could communicate with the constituency, engage the constituency, and move people to action.

That, in my view, is the potential in one particular area that we have for a serious long-term commitment to grassroots community organizing with electoral politics as a significant component of that program. Thank you very much.

**GERI MANNION:** Hello. I have an easy job because my colleagues have said it all. I'm going to talk specifically about the funding world and what you should consider, as representatives of nonprofits, when trying to get foundations to understand the importance of funding ongoing voter work.

I have been very lucky. I have been working at Carnegie for many years, and Carnegie Corporation has a long history of being supportive of public policy advocacy as well as voter engagement work. We were, in fact, a funder that actually supported the development of the first voter registration projects that came out of the South, the civil rights movement, and efforts to increase the Latino and Asian American vote in the late '80s/'90s. I have been very lucky to be at an institution that values this kind of work.

Today, I direct what is known as the "Strengthening U.S. Democracy" program. In general, my whole job is to increase civic engagement in the United States. How does a foundation do that but through nonprofits? In fact, all of these folks on the panel – their organizations – receive Carnegie funding and we are very proud to say so. They are some of the best in the field. They understand what it is like to try to work at the community level, at the state level, at the federal level; to do the work right, to do it legally, and to do it well.

At the moment, the Corporation's objective is to increase civic engagement among two particular groups: immigrants and youth. We see them, because of changing demographics, as the future of our country. As you know, young people and immigrants do not have high participation rates in general. Therefore, we consider the structural barriers—the institutional barriers—in our current political system that inhibit the political participation of people who do not like the current political system.

Carnegie looks at removing two types of barriers to participation:

First, the structural barriers. For example the role money plays in politics and campaign finance reform. We look at the pathway to citizenship: How does one, in fact, encourage folks to get on that pathway to naturalization, which is not an easy task, especially since 9/11, given that the Naturalization Services Agency is now within Homeland Security. There are approximately 9.5 million people eligible to naturalize and getting processed can be daunting.

We also put funding into issues such as the state of voting machines and Help America Vote Act implementation. As you know, this has not gone as smoothly as people would have expected and, in fact, our country does not put much money into the larger issues of voting infrastructure. After 2000, \$3 billion dollars seemed like a lot of money. But it gets spread over 50 states and those states face new challenges since 9/11. There are particular challenges with immigrant communities. Each of the states is struggling with how to ensure that changes are implemented well.

Second, Carnegie works to address attitudinal barriers. There are a lot of folks who resist being engaged. They find the system not responsive. They do not believe the representatives in Washington represent what they want, what their communities need or what their families need. We work particularly on educating immigrant groups or immigrants communities. Immigrants no longer are just in the traditional receiving communities, but, in fact, are in Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Iowa – lots

of places where there is no support infrastructure to help them assimilate. In the last century, there were people and structures in ethnic communities that would help folks understand what it is like to be an American, to be a citizen. Today, many of these institutions, including unions and political party structures, are gone or weakened.

We also address civic education. The schools no longer teach civics, and if you have kids yourself, you probably understand that. Only about 10 percent of public schools teach civics. So how does one restore civics? How do you teach people what they should know about being engaged in civic life, about how they can, in fact, change the policy framework? Many do not understand how the city council works, and do not understand how the state legislature works and, in fact, do not even know how to vote. We take it for granted that most people would understand how to vote, but given the complexity of the machines today, we cannot assume that. I had to help my own mother in 2004 to use the touch screen voting system.

I also co-chair a group known as the Funders' Committee for Civic Participations – a group of funders focused on increasing civic engagement. After 2004, we tried to evaluate what happened with voter engagement activities. About \$150 million of C3 money was spent on getting people engaged in the 2004 elections. It was a very tight election. People were very excited, they were interested, it was very polarizing in many ways, and a ton of money flowed in.

The problem, however, is that the flow of money is not consistent. We are approaching the 2006 elections, and there is perhaps less than a half of a percentage point of that money available. You get all these folks registered, you get them interested elections, and then, without sustained funding to ensure continued outreach to those communities where there continues to be the best ongoing work, who is going to turn out in 2006? Who is going to continue to perform their civic duty?

At the Funders' Committee, we undertook the *Voter Engagement Evaluation Project*, which offers 10 lessons about what funders should do to encourage nonprofits to engage in voter and civic participation activities. (A copy may be found at [www.proteusfund.org](http://www.proteusfund.org))

Outreach and support should be ongoing; there should be constant contact from trusted sources. This is not rocket science, but it does in fact cost money. You need to ensure that the issue-based organizations that are part of every single community do in fact understand the importance of being engaged with voting and other civic operations. If you are an environmental organization, or a health care organization, or an economic development organization, and you are not capable of turning out voters who are going to show people in power that they really want change, the people in power are not going to change. It is pretty clear that people react to power, and power reacts to numbers, and numbers are voters. But unless the local communities understand that, they are not likely to listen and act or even to vote.

In addition, the Funders' Committee, in collaboration with the Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR), has just published a report entitled "New Americans Vote." We were very interested obviously in the immigration movement, and there is still a huge amount that needs to be done to ensure that new citizens are knowledgeable enough to vote, that they get the information they need in the language of their choice. This book, which is available on [www.gcir.org](http://www.gcir.org), is a primer for funders and suggests some ideas to engage that community.

Lastly, the Funders Committee publishes an orange booklet called *Voter Registration, Education, and Ballot Campaigns*. Most funders, frankly, are not comfortable in funding voter engagement work. There are different rules for different kinds of foundations; they need to know the IRS regulations. But there is a lot of latitude. Foundations could be doing much more. It is part of the nonprofits' responsibility, I think, to educate your funders about what they can and cannot do. This booklet will help you. (The "orange booklet," *Voter Registration, Education and Ballot Campaigns: A Funders' Guide to Legal Issues*, is available on [www.gcir.org](http://www.gcir.org).)

**NAN ARON:** Thank you all. After listening to these three wonderful speakers I am prompted to ask a question: As nonprofits, we know the prohibition against supporting or opposing any candidate for elected office. But at the same time, most of us are really itching to do something during an election season, particularly now and during these coming months. It is a great time to get out there. But how do we keep our work nonpartisan so we do not step over that line?

**MARCIA AVNER:** This is the question I am asked most often when we do training. Nonprofit folks – staff, board members – will say, "What do I do after I talk to the person about registering to vote, or after we have done a candidate forum and a person comes to me because she gets health care services at our clinic, or because we are her child care provider, and she says, 'I care about child care. You know who the candidates are. Who should I vote for?'"

That is the moment. That is when you cringe. But there is only one disciplined – underline *disciplined* – way to answer, which is to say, "I cannot tell you how to vote. You are a smart person. Here are the websites and the phone numbers of all of the candidates who will be on the ballot in your district. Call their offices and ask them about child care. Go to their websites and see what they say."

We are rigorous in our attention to this. When we have people driving voters to the polls, we insist that they not only either strip off or cover any bumper stickers, and remove any pins or badges, we go so far as to say, "Do not wear the colors that would be identified with any candidate."

We need to be rigorous about this because this is the one area where we can be challenged. And the way we explain it to our clients is really important. It is not, "Oh, I can't tell you that." That is confusing to people. We need to be very clear and explain that we are a nonpartisan organization, we care about you as the voter, here are the resources that will help you get answers directly from the candidates and their materials. That is the only way to do this and it does require some self-policing. You have to be really clear about how important this is to nonprofits. We can be incredibly effective. But if we violate that trust and go partisan, we lose it all.

**GERI MANNION:** We sometimes hear from folks who try to do candidate forums and have difficulty getting all candidates to participate, or both parties. They ask, "What do I do if only the Democrats show or the Republicans show? Does that mean I'm not bipartisan or nonpartisan?" We say as long as you have solid records that you tried to get people from both political parties to participate, as long as you made a really good faith effort to reach out as far as possible, I think that is as far as you can go.

**NAN ARON:** That's right. Two other things I want to add: One is a little plug for our materials. At the Alliance for Justice, we produce books in plain English and not legalese that will help you walk through what you can and cannot do. Look at our website – [www.afj.org](http://www.afj.org). We handle any number of

technical assistance questions and we exist to back up what you are doing. So, please, use our resources and our expertise!

Even though you cannot do any kind of electioneering work during your work hours, that does not mean that we relinquish all of our First Amendment rights to participate in an election. We *can* do all this kind of work outside of the office, outside of office time, during weekends, evenings, and the like.

But remember Marcia's admonitions -- they are very wise and very helpful. And just when you want to give some advice to a group as to who they are to vote for, someone from the State Attorney General's office might be sitting in the room just waiting for you to give your opinion so that they can slam you the next day. Be really careful. But do not give up your rights. You just cannot get involved in this work during your nonprofit time in the office.

**GERI MANNION:** For a long time in this work, our strategy has been to remember we are not the lawyers. We invite the Alliance for Justice to come and talk to grantmakers about what they can do with respect to lobbying, ethics issue, etc.

**NAN ARON:** We have a question from the audience...

**QUESTION:** I'm Bob Dendy from Lynchburg, Virginia. You tiptoed around enforcement. I wondered if any of you would speak directly to concerns that some of us may have, that certain religious organizations and maybe other nonprofit are intentionally flouting the laws and intentionally endorsing a candidate and do you feel there is a need for more enforcement and what would that look like if there is?

**NAN ARON:** Okay. Liz would you like to address that question? Liz Towne is Director of Advocacy Programs for the Alliance for Justice. While she is coming to the microphone, I can offer my view and that is, I think there is enough enforcement at the moment. I hate to admit this publicly, and this is probably public as we get, but every time someone goes and puts in a bill asking for more money for the IRS, my view and I think the view of the staff at the Alliance for Justice is, they have as much money and staff as they probably need. We are really talking about First Amendment activities and I would much rather run the risk of someone engaging in some improper contact, although I know no one in this room would do that, than have legions of IRS agents all over the country, monitoring every single time we raised our hand or opened our voice or contacted a politician.

**LIZ TOWNE:** As we saw from the 2004 elections, where there were a lot of investigations into many nonprofits, it really crossed the ideological spectrum. The investigations that the IRS is in the process of concluding from 2004 involved both groups on the left and right and did involve a lot of churches. We have no reason to believe that the IRS investigation has been one-sided in any way, again because of that broad spectrum. A lot of groups are filing complaints when they see organizations not acting in accordance with their tax-exempt status. I would encourage you to do the same thing if you see an organization that is not acting properly. Feel free to file a complaint with the IRS and they will look into those allegations.

**QUESTION:** My name is Eric Draper. I'm with Audubon of Florida, which is a conservation organization. In 2004 we watched largely from the sidelines as one of the Voter's Voice operations was going on. It is very hard for us to figure out how to engage in activities from a traditional, environmental

group perspective because our constituencies are not the same as the constituencies that were being targeted during those elections.

So one question is, did you see anything in 2004 that might inform us about ways to participate? Second, a related question what people are doing that is new and exciting and interesting to get folks engaged?

**GERI MANNION:** Environmental issues provide a great way to engage people because there are always folks who care about their communities. There was a national effort in 2004 called the Earth Day Network that worked on voter registration, education to get out the vote in 2004 and they are continuing to do that. They worked with Southwest Voter (svrep.org) and the NAACP Voter Fund (naacpnvf.org), Project Vote (projectvote.org) with the idea of using community-based issues that people would care about in the environment in a very broad sense, whether it was toxics potentially in your backyard or health issues like asthma – things that people in the community would see as a potential public policy issue. That was very effective.

The League of Conservation Voters (lcv.org) is one of the best voter-engagement groups in the country. They do a lot of things all relating to conservation issues.

Contact remains important. Research shows constant contact with voters by organizations that are trusted results in folks being much more engaged, more willing to turn out. And we are seeing the use of new technologies to do that, especially among young people – sending voter-engagement messages directly to cell phones, bypassing the political ads.

**DEEPAK BHARGAVA:** One tool that is complex to start up but it is very valuable for organizations is something called “list enhancement.” You to match your membership list against a voter file and, through that, you find out which of your members are participating and which are not, which are frequent voters, which are infrequent voters. You could also match that against a whole lot of other information – what districts they are in, demography, consumer data, and so on.

That allows you to build a long-term strategy around a kind of pyramid of civic engagement. You start at the bottom – who are your new and infrequent voters that you are targeting? You bring them into the system as new registrants or, if they are infrequent voters, bump them up to the next level, to become a frequent voter. You take the frequent voters and move them up to the point where they are members of your organization, dues-paying members. The next category is people who are activists on issues, who respond to calls to action or donate money or take action when you send them an e-mail.

Finally you want to think about a top tier, which in my view is the key, which is an expanding number of people who are leaders in organizations – meaning they are trained as precinct captains, as people who can do training for other people on voter participation, mobilization, who can knock on doors and so on. This is a long-term program to build every rung on that pyramid, to build the base at the bottom with the idea of openly having larger and larger numbers of people who are trained in electoral methodology and committed to doing it in every cycle and between cycles.

**MARCIA AVNER:** I want to add a couple of comments specific to environmental organizations. We found that there are number of environmental groups that have both a C3 and C4 and some of those will choose to be active at the C4 level. That provides a whole different set of opportunities

and constraints. For some environmental groups that choice needs to be made very early, determining whether you will operate at the C3 fully nonpartisan level or operate as a C4. One of the places where C3 environmental organizations can be very helpful to a coalition working on voter engagement is around the legislative component. This is not just turning out voters but there are all kinds of issues that become legislative around voter protection and voting rights. The environmentalist brings some gravitas to the discussion and particularly a C3 coalition called the Minnesota Environmental Partnership.

**QUESTION:** I wanted to mention that NPAction ([npaction.org](http://npaction.org)) – a project of OMB Watch – has just launched a special section on how nonprofits can help American voters. NPAction is an online advocacy resource for nonprofit organizations. Hopefully, we will showcase organizations that are doing model work. There is an invitation on the site for groups to submit their activities to be showcased. We hope we will be hearing from some of you.

I also want to ask Marcia about the national network.

**MARCIA AVNER:** Thank you. There are a number of organizations that have been doing work similar to what the Council of Nonprofits has been doing and we formed an initial partnership with people who had worked on mass votes. Over time, we established a nonprofit voter engagement network and it is genuinely a network. Right now, there are seven states involved. There is a Connecticut project that is focused on New Haven. Ohio is participating, along with Michigan, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Colorado, and Minnesota.

The goals are multiple.

Number one is the free and clean exchange of information, including the tool kits that people have put together, the guidebooks, the photographs, the things that will help an organization figure out how to get started, including the list of resources and good information about the law.

Second, is to start to develop principles and standards of practice so that together, as people who have been doing this, we can codify some of the things we are having to figure out on the ground in the middle of doing it. We hope to establish a system of practices for organizing.

Third is to get money to the states for the work that they need. We need capacity. As we do some fund raising for this, the major thrust is to get the money to the states so for staffing, materials, at least a fragile, if not a strong, infrastructure, a growing infrastructure to do the work.

We will have more information about it in the months ahead. We are starting with an initial grant from Carnegie and there have been additional funds raised but as it has an opportunity to grow and expand, we will have the word out there to all of you.

**GERI MANNION:** You also should be aware of the National Voter Registration Act, which was passed in 1993. It was supposed to use not only motor vehicle agencies to register people to vote, but also social service agencies within the state. It never has been implemented as it was supposed to be. If you seek out disability assistance or Medicare, you are supposed to be able to register to vote, but generally it does not happen. If nonprofit agencies, social service providers, used networks like the one that Marcia described, we could reach large numbers of folk who have never been registered or even asked to participate.

**QUESTION:** Aaron Siegel from the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge. What I hear is that this is a long-term process. I'd like to pick up on what Ms. Mannion said about civics taking a back seat – not only a back seat but being out of the bus – in terms of educating our young people. Our organization focuses on civic responsibility for young people. (I want to salute Carnegie – we are working with them in Pennsylvania, on a project called PennCORD, to establish civics education guidelines that will be implemented throughout the commonwealth.) This is probably the largest single population that we have of newly emerging voters. How do we prepare that population, recognizing the lack of basic civics education they have had? I understand all of these disenfranchised voters or voters who have not exercised their rights. My concern is all these young voters who, within a period of a very short time, will be enfranchised but not encouraged because of their lack of information and knowledge to become part of the voting population.

**GERI MANNION:** What Carnegie has funded is called the Civic Mission of the Schools Campaign ([civicmissionofthestates.org](http://civicmissionofthestates.org)). It is going to be co-chaired nationally by Sandra Day O'Connor, former Supreme Court Justice, and Roy Romer, former governor of Colorado and head of the Los Angeles school system. The problem, unfortunately, is a local issue because education policies are made at the state or the local level. If you are interested in this issue, you first must determine exactly what the state of civics education is in your state. There are great model programs out there, such as PennCORD.

Unfortunately, the No Child Left Behind law has pushed out a lot of learning opportunities. If students must learn to read and write, why not read about the Constitution? Why not read about the First Amendment?

John Anderson – you may remember him; he ran for President as a third party candidate in 1980 – he wrote a piece recently asking why we don't register kids to vote while they are in school? Why do we have to wait until they are 18? They may not be able to vote until 18 but if they are registered when they get their driver's license, for example, that may eliminate a big structural barrier. Many people do not know how to register to vote.

If you look at Louisiana, for example, which is trying to get folks to vote in the New Orleans mayoral election, some of the structural barriers are just mind-boggling. Their absentee ballot application system was 20 pages long.

**DEEPAK BHARGAVA:** I completely agree. I would add that voting happens, in my view, in a social context. At a certain level, voting as an individual is an irrational act. It is rarely true that your individual vote will make a difference. It has to be part of a collective endeavor.

I'm actually very encouraged on the youth front. There are hundreds and thousands of new youth organizing efforts. The ones I'm most familiar with are working with communities of color, but I see them in other communities, as well. There are a number of national organizations that have formed over the last few years that focus on that constituency. The idea is to involve people not just in voting but in issues that matter to young people: higher education tuition, criminal justice issues, etc. I think the question is how we build a path of youth activism that engages people on the things that they hold most dear. In that context, voting makes sense. How do we build social context for young people? Some of the tools may be very different, given the ways in which young people communicate with each other.

**MARCIA AVNER:** I would add that in the organizing we already have talked about, there is no age limit for people who can volunteer to do voter turnout. In our state we have worked hard to make sure that there is the position of junior election judge so that we have 17- and 18-year-olds who get paid a very small stipend to spend a very long day assisting election judges. When we organize, we first of all ask people to take their families when they go to the polls because that is how a lot of us learned to vote. We just went to the polls with our parents or our aunts and uncles or whomever. We try to engage especially high school juniors and seniors in this work.

There are a number of C4 organizations, including Wellstone Action, which is doing Campus Camp Wellstones, 55 of them on campuses across the country. They do it as a C4 so it is not fully nonpartisan in the way that we have talked about here, but it is a civics engagement program that is an overwhelming success right now. They cannot keep up with the demand for it. I think we need to look at those opportunities and build the youth component into anything we are doing. We have a legislator who periodically announces that 12-year-olds should vote – while there are moments when I do not agree with that, having a discussion gets young people to pay attention.

**QUESTION:** Mark Rosenman of the Union Institute and University. You have talked a lot about voter registration and getting out to vote, voter mobilization. I would like to ask you to spend a little more time in the middle on voter education. Other than saying we cannot talk about that, I do think there are things that nonprofit organizations can do to work with our constituencies so that the exercise of the franchise is more informed. Could you speak a little bit about what kinds of activities are allowable in that territory?

**MARCIA AVNER:** I can tell you a few that we have used. Deepak may have a broader range of ideas to offer.

We create real incentives for groups to do candidate meetings by using any grant money that we have not only to pay trainers but to support candidate forums. We do many grants of \$150 to \$250 to get six or seven groups together and create a forum where people can actually meet a candidate.

There are some C3s that carefully do voting records but it is increasingly difficult to do voting records that matter. We have had only bad experiences with candidate surveys. (There are so many groups asking candidates to do surveys that, at least in our state, the two major parties are advising candidates not to complete surveys unless they originate with the major newspapers.)

We have worked to get people to come to places where they can hear from candidates and to give them information about web connections or phone connections. Not everybody has internet access but almost everybody has phone access to call candidates' offices. We urge people to watch the public affairs television programs that are increasingly available in multiple languages.

**DEEPAK BHARGAVA:** I would say this is pretty much the bane of our existence because it is quite complicated and there are very fine distinctions that matter a great deal, whether something is legal or not legal. This is why I think that if you view voting as part of a larger program for civic engagement, it makes all the difference. The rap on the doors, as I see it, is not that you need to turn out on election day but we want you to be involved in this community organization that is working on these issues, and we want to hear what you care about. What matters to you? What are you passionate about? The invitation is to be part of an ongoing organization, an ongoing campaign that is led by and driven by those issues.

And part of what that organization does is host meetings with elected officials, host candidate forums. People then develop an understanding of how politics works, what is going on with the issues they care about. Doing it just around the election puts you as a C3 and big trouble because the scorecards do not work.

Candidate forums very close to an election are highly problematic. I think it is imperative to do this as something that is a permanent part of what an organization is about.

**GERI MANNION:** For many years, we funded Project Vote Smart ([vote-smart.org](http://vote-smart.org)), which is very easy to get to -- you put in your zip code and you can get all your candidates, issue information etc. But even these folks have had trouble getting good information from candidates. Candidates fear giving out information because they feel they are giving oppositional research to their opponents. That is unacceptable. I think candidates should provide voters with information. And there are some good sources of information: League of Women Voters ([lww.org](http://lww.org)) provides good resources. The Library of Congress through THOMAS ([thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov)) has information on all votes. You can easily compile those resources that will give people information in a wide range of issues.

**MARCIA AVNER:** One of the pieces of information that people like to see early is what will be on the ballot. The ballot can be very confusing to people. They may know the top of the ballot but they do not know the bottom of the ballot.

Envision, if you will, a circle with advocacy and organizing in the middle and around the circle an ongoing circle of election activity and legislative advocacy. We capture the interest of people around each of those. And we need to be bold about the voting rights things that we care about. I think it would be wonderful if every state had Election Day registration. I think it would be wonderful if we could get rid of the bills that are cropping up around the country that say in order to register to vote, you must have a passport, a birth certificate or naturalization papers. I think we need to clean up what happens at the polling places in terms of challengers and poll watchers, both the abuses of that privilege and the constraints on the right of people to engage. I think there are people who will be part of this in an ongoing way because their sense of justice will be provoked and they will be part of something bigger than they are.

And it is social. We tell volunteers if you are trying to get people to the polls, tell them you will pick up their neighbors and stop for coffee on the way. It makes all the difference in the world.

**QUESTION:** I'm Liz Gaines from Osborne Association in New York and I think it would be wonderful if the 650,000 people that leave state prison and federal prison every year were permitted to vote, and the millions of people with felony convictions were permitted to vote. I honestly do not understand why so many people involved in this issue do not support felon re-enfranchisement. We would have had a different President.

Largely this is an issue of perpetual punishment, this idea that voting is a privilege of some kind which, having been convicted of a crime, you lose. I have been a little bit disappointed that people who are interested in voter engagement are not standing up for this. I think we underestimate tremendously the degree to which young people are turned off by the lack of support for felon re-enfranchisement. We also do not want to deal with the racial aspect of this -- it has resulted in the disenfranchisement of the significant number of people of color.

**QUESTION:** My name is Aaron Marquez. I'm an undergrad student here in School of Foreign Service. Before coming to Georgetown, I had the opportunity to serve in AmeriCorps for a couple of years and I saw the ability they had to really help the nonprofit community in the country. I was able to do civic engagement work with youth and I observed that the many people after their year of service went on to become much more active citizens. But one of the downfalls that I have seen with AmeriCorps is that once you decide to accept AmeriCorps funding, you basically give up any opportunity to be a political organization. Should AmeriCorps have the opportunity to help in voter activity? And what is the role if they do?

**GERI MANNION:** The only way they could get AmeriCorps approved in '93 was to put in that provision. You would have to go back and change the legislation. However, I think you could show that it is a bipartisan organization. There are senators from both parties who are very supportive – you would think they invented it; it is better than sliced bread. You could argue this is Civic Education 101. Another organization that is not allowed to do voter registration is Head Start. Head Start is not allowed to do voter registration on its premises.

**DEEPAK BHARGAVA:** My mentor, Pablo Eisenberg, has long made the case that one role for philanthropy is to invest in fellowships for young people that would allow them to have experience working for nonprofit organizations doing advocacy, organizing, voter registration, direct service. I'm skeptical that we are going to get money out of the federal government any time soon to do voter registration. It appears to me in fact, we are going to have to stop a lot of bleeding in restricting voting rights. But I do think the private philanthropic sector can make a major investment in this.

**NAN ARON:** I want thank all of you for coming this afternoon. I hope we can carry on this dialogue when we leave this room. You know in the 2004 elections, millions of new voters signed up – the largest number in more than a generation. Clearly we can do it. Bt we cannot leave it to just to handful of organizations. We must incorporate this work and these activities in everything we do.

So, thank you for coming. It was a treat for us up here and I hope you learned a little something in the course of it.

**KATHY KRETMAN:** Before you leave, I want to thank Nan and Marcia and Deepak and Geri for being the inspiration that we knew they would be. Thank you all for coming.