NAO ANNUAL PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA - 2021

Using NAO’s Public Policy Principles and Inquiry Framework, NAO promotes an accountable, ethical, and equitable nonprofit sector. NAO enhances the ability of Oregon’s nonprofits to serve their missions, the people of Oregon, and our communities by advocating for their needs. We support the ability of nonprofits to engage in advocacy and lobbying to the fullest extent allowed by law.

NAO is prioritizing the following state and federal legislative and policy issues for 2021:

1. **Build Trust in Civil Society:** Trust in government – and broadly in civil society- has been sinking across America and here in Oregon. Communities are feeling fragile, fearful, agitated, and risk growing disenfranchised with the political process. Communities yearn to find understanding and solutions around racial equality, social justice, economic inequality and a growing division between urban and rural areas. NAO will encourage and empower nonprofit leadership to utilize their organization’s influence to promote compromise and solutions. NAO will help educate nonprofits on how they can advocate and clearly articulate support for or against specific issues while rebuilding trust in civil society. Specific legislative initiatives we’ll be watching include:

   A. **Promote Civic Engagement:** NAO believes that every individual and community counts. All people have the potential to be agents of renewal and innovation in their own lives, families, and community. Dialog between nonprofit leaders and legislators is vital throughout all aspects of community service. NAO will continue to advocate on behalf of the sector that the legislature maintains an inclusive and transparent process that gives ample time for community engagement and feedback even with pandemic-required distancing and/or virtual procedures in place. NAO will educate nonprofits regarding these topics and assist nonprofits in engaging in these initiatives.

   B. **Urban / Rural Divide:** Urban and rural demographics continue to evolve as Oregon’s population grows, yet legislation has typically been designed by, and in response to, urban population activities. These tactics do not necessarily benefit rural districts and, in some cases, may cause undue economic hardship. NAO will help educate nonprofits regarding these topics and assist nonprofits in engaging in legislative dialogue across the state.

   C. **Broadband Access:** Access to the Internet continues to be an invisible barrier to rural and economically-challenged populations. In the wake of Coronavirus and physical distancing, broadband services are now more necessary than ever to maintain access to the public education curriculum and business operations. NAO will support public and private partnerships to bridge the broadband gaps across the state to provide equitable access to all Oregon residents.
2. **Equity Justice**: NAO is committed to building a more just and equitable Oregon. We recognize the history of oppression that has resulted in ongoing disparities for some communities, especially communities of color. We believe that nonprofits that prioritize engaging diverse perspectives and evolve to be inclusive, behave equitably and have profound impacts on society. NAO will advocate for organizations that work through racial justice in order to create positive systemic change.

3. **Nonprofit Independence**: We believe in the power of the nonprofit sector, led by community. Independent nonprofits are generally better equipped, more efficient, more nimble, and execute services at a higher quality than government bodies. NAO recognizes the gaps in translating these values to legislative officials and will continue to be an advocacy conduit in amplifying the value of the nonprofit sector to fulfill community needs. We will protect the *independence* of the charitable nonprofit sector from government policies and regulations that aim to subjugate nonprofits to government and would damage the public’s trust in 501(c)(3) nonprofits. We will protect against regulations and concepts like the repeal of the Johnson Amendment or expansion of state requirements for public records and meetings laws.

4. **Relief and Reconstruction**: The Coronavirus Pandemic and 2020 wildfires have disproportionately impacted communities across the state, making access to relief and recovery resources irregular and inequitable. Nonprofits serve as critical civic infrastructure in times of emergency and disasters but receive far less attention and funding in planning for disaster and continuity of operations. Nonprofits are already embedded in our communities and can mobilize thousands of volunteers quickly for response and recovery. NAO will support efforts, engagement, and NAO will continue to advocate for time-sensitive action by federal and state government for nonprofit agencies to expedite access to vital resources, information, and support and investment by government for nonprofit organizations in disaster preparedness and post-disaster resources.

5. **Common Sense Statute**: NAO will support the “clean-up” of existing statutes and regulations where there is a tangible benefit or greater clarity in wording for the charitable nonprofit sector.

6. **Other Matters as Needed**: The NAO Public Policy Committee and staff will use the NAO Public Policy Priorities as a guideline to identify any urgent priorities that need to be addressed in 2021.