



Southeast Michigan Public Policy Council

Background

Unfortunately, few have a strong understanding of the strong role and positive economic impact nonprofits have in the State of Michigan. Since the implementation of term limits in 1997, it has become even more imperative to educate policymakers, the media and the general public on the importance of nonprofits as well as on issues that impact them. .

The Michigan Nonprofit Association, comprising of nearly 1,000 member organizations, created a Public Policy Committee to address public policy issues of concerns to its membership. In 2007, the Southeast Michigan Public Policy Council was formed to act as a bridge from MNA and its public policy committee to the thousands of nonprofits throughout Southeast Michigan to civically engage them in helping to shape public policy for the benefit of all Michigan nonprofits and the communities they serve. As such, the MNA Public Policy Committee and its Southeast Michigan Public Policy Council closely collaborate to formulate mutual advocacy goals and objectives.

Goals

The overarching goal of the regional council is to respond, on the grassroots level in a proactive and reactive manner, to public policy that broadly affects the nonprofit sector and to sub-sector issues that could have far-reaching implications for all Michigan nonprofits.

- To inform nonprofits in the region of public policy issues impacting nonprofits across the state.
- To develop and implement grassroots strategies for addressing critical issues of concern.
- To educate the region's media and government officials on issues impacting nonprofits and on the important roles the sector plays in our regional and state economy.
- To alert the Michigan Nonprofit Association of public policy issues on the regional level that may become statewide areas of concern for nonprofits.

Structure

The Council is comprised of representatives from charities and nonprofits interested in furthering the public policy work of the nonprofit sector. Members of the Council meet on a bi-monthly basis to discuss advocacy efforts and to become better informed about policymaking that impacts them, whether on the city, regional, or state level. The co-chairs of the Council serve on MNA's Public Policy committee to report on issues of interest to the state-wide Council. The Council may take positions on regional policy issues, so long as they don't contradict positions of the MNA board and are consistent with MNA's mission.

As a result of substantial discourse, in 2009 the Council established two primary advocacy priorities that it intends to pursue for the foreseeable future. They are described below:

Priorities

- **Advocate that the State of Michigan positively address its long-term structural deficit –**
Nonprofits realize that until and unless the State of Michigan gets its fiscal house in order it is futile for nonprofits, with their limited resources, to argue against cuts in spending or increases in the nonprofit sector, despite increasing demand for services and government's increasing reliance on the sector to deliver programming. As such, we are joining with many others across the state to insist that policymakers make the hard and difficult decisions necessary to put the state in a sound fiscal position going forward.
- **Educate elected officials and the public about the economic power of the nonprofit sector –**
Employing one in ten workers in the state, the nonprofit community is a powerful economic force for the state. There are many misperceptions about the role of the nonprofit sector and the tremendous impact of their work on the people and communities of Michigan. The Southeast Michigan nonprofit community seeks to more actively and effectively communicate with the people of Michigan and the elected officials who serve them about the role and economic power of the nonprofit sector. We do so by sharing strong data and sharing our numerous impactful stories.

A summary of the Council's accomplishments to date are noted in a related document: *SE MI Public Policy Accomplishments*.