

Members of Congress invest 100 percent of their time in office impacting the lives of American citizens and businesses. And the philanthropic sector is no exception. However, in order to prevent the enactment of laws that may inadvertently impact the work of the sector, and to maintain a legislative environment that incentivizes charitable giving, the philanthropic sector must invest in public policy and educate federal lawmakers about the role of philanthropy in society.

What Is Foundations on the Hill?

The Foundations on the Hill (FOTH) conference is an annual, two-day, public policy event held in Washington, D.C., by the Council on Foundations and the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers. Each year foundation and regional association representatives from around the country attend FOTH to feel the pulse of Congress, receive updates about federal proposals impacting the field, and meet with their members of Congress.

Why Foundations on the Hill?

FOTH has something for everyone, from public policy veterans to grantmaking representatives who are new to engaging in public policy. Attendees receive updates on federal issues and legislation impacting the sector, participate in trainings to prepare for meetings with their lawmakers, hear from “Washington insiders” about the atmosphere on Capitol Hill, and attend workshops.

Philanthropy’s Role in Society

At FOTH, participants have an opportunity to convene in Washington, D.C., with colleagues from around the state and country, and to illustrate to members of Congress philanthropy’s independent and innovative role in improving local communities.

By sharing your stories, building relationships with congressional offices, and establishing philanthropy as a resource to Congress, we hope to maintain a legislative environment that promotes a strong and healthy charitable and philanthropic sector.



Betsy Wearing meets with Rep. Tim Huelskamp (R-Kan.)

“It’s always a great experience to meet with our legislators and their staffs on the Hill, and to do something with a group of foundation representatives from our state.”

— FOTH Participant

Foundations on the Hill 2011 Snapshot

More than 250 foundation and grantmaking representatives attended the FOTH conference, including 77 first-time attendees and 35 states and the District of Columbia. In total, FOTH attendees had meetings in nearly 150 House offices and 35 Senate offices. Several foundation types were represented:

- 65 Community Foundations
- 61 Private Independent Foundations
- 51 Family Foundations
- 24 Regional Associations
- 10 Corporate Foundations

Philanthropy's Role in Advancing Solutions Starts at Foundations on the Hill

No one is certain what the future holds, but it is clear that our 21st century crises will require unprecedented levels of deliberate partnership between business, philanthropic, academic, faith, and government sectors to create the sustainable solutions needed.

Foundations on the Hill is a critical step toward embracing this new reality as foundations seek to build relationships with their legislators in the U.S. Congress and increase awareness regarding the value that philanthropic organizations can provide as centers of research and development, neutral party conveners, and visionary community leaders.

Sidney R. Hargro is the executive director of the Community Foundation of South Jersey.

Share Your Story at Foundations on the Hill

With so much debate going on in Washington about how to reduce the federal deficit and reform the federal tax code, I don't think any of us in the philanthropic sector can afford to not get involved. All chips are on the table this time around, and it is our responsibility to ensure that our work, our impact in the community, and our contribution as an economic driver is understood. I have attended for the last four years and found it a very effective venue to meet with my legislators and share information about the work we are doing and the needs of our communities.

Nancy Van Milligen is the president and CEO of the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque.

Make Connections at Foundations on the Hill

The personal connections we continue to make with our representatives and staff in D.C. continue to pay big dividends. They are often what makes a staffer or Member comfortable calling on us as a resource year-round. It was a personal and professional pleasure to talk with several very bright Congressional staffers, finding connections with less than six degrees of separation, as we awaited Rep. Boozman (D-Ariz.) to return from a vote to meet with us.

Helen M. Ishii is the director of Member and Government Relations at the Southeastern Council of Foundations.

To learn more about FOTH and to participate in next year's event, contact Chatrane Birbal (703-879-0689) in the Council's Public Policy Department or Courtney Moore (703-879-0809) at the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers.

"With politics as polarized as ever, the foundation community can create the space and broad dialogue necessary to craft thoughtful policy."

**Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.),
Member, House Ways and Means
Committee**

"As a donor to the Midland Community Foundation, I look forward to the annual visit by Michigan foundations to Washington. They are important collaborators and leaders in our communities in Michigan and provide me with valuable stories of how legislation we pass, like the IRA Charitable Rollover, is helping the nonprofit sector."

**Rep. Dave Camp (R-Mich.),
Chairman, House Ways and
Means Committee**

"It is easy to support the Legislative Goals of the foundation community because they can only make our partnership and philanthropy stronger."

Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.)

"It is critical that foundation leaders take an active role in shaping public policy by building relationships with their members of Congress. Moreover, lawmakers need to know more about the work that foundations and corporate giving programs do in their states and districts."

**Rep. Patrick Tiberi (R-Ohio),
Member, House Ways and Means
Committee**