



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Legislatures in Florida and Virginia Move to Protect Foundations from Overreaching Influence from Pressure Groups and Government**

#### *Alliance for Charitable Reform Continues State Push to Promote and Defend Philanthropic Freedom*

(WASHINGTON, DC, June 1, 2010) – On Thursday, May 27, Governor Charlie Crist of Florida signed into law legislation that will protect the freedom and independence of foundations to carry out their charitable goals and missions.

SB 998, which passed unanimously as part of a broader Trust Administration bill, would prevent government or state officials from imposing on foundations arbitrary standards with regard to governance and grantmaking decisions. The legislation was drafted with the support of the Alliance for Charitable Reform, a project of the Philanthropy Roundtable, to protect foundations from undue influence from NGOs and others and sponsored in the Florida Senate by John Thrasher (R-Jacksonville) and in the Florida House of Representative by John Wood (R- Haines City).

Recently, activist groups in Florida and other states have attempted to pressure foundations over hiring choices, board composition, and funding priorities. The Alliance for Charitable Reform has countered that a vibrant charitable sector protects and encourages the independence of charitable donors. SB 998 represents a strong step toward derailing such unproductive attacks.

State Senator Mike Fasano (R- New Port Richey), a champion of the Philanthropic Freedoms Act, said “We must be vigilant in encouraging and supporting the organizations and individuals who are stepping up to the plate to care for their neighbors and communities. Florida’s foundations and the charities have been instrumental in helping our neighbors with their economic struggles. Florida only hopes to sustain the solid record of giving by offering charitable organizations protections of the private information about their donors, members and recipients of their good work. In these troubling economic times we need to encourage more giving to these charitable organizations that are helping our most vulnerable and governments should do NOTHING to get in the way of the good work they do.”

Foundation leaders in the state welcome the legislation. According to David Odahowski, the President and CEO of the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation in Winter Park, Florida, “the legislation is a guardian of philanthropic freedom and donor intent, now and for generations. It strengthens Florida’s commitment to the creation and the possible relocation of foundations to Florida. By protecting foundations from undue outside influence and groups who would seek to advance their own agendas, the legislation ensures that foundations can continue to thrive and support the communities that rely on them.”

The legislation builds off of the work of the James Madison Institute in Tallahassee. The James Madison Institute, which has promoted philanthropic freedom as one of their core priorities, recently published a policy brief on the need for such legislation.

The new law comes on the heels of another legislative effort championed by the Alliance for Charitable Reform in Virginia. There, the Alliance for Charitable Reform initiated the passage of a resolution praising the important work of the nonprofit sector in Virginia and encouraging additional foundations to locate in the Commonwealth.

The resolution, which passed unanimously in late February, praised the charitable community in Virginia and expressed the sense of the legislature that they would promote laws and policies to encourage foundation formation and protect the vital work done by nonprofits in the Commonwealth. According to State Senator Jill Vogel, one of the resolution's sponsors, the resolution was "an opportunity for the Virginia legislature to recognize the valuable contributions of the nonprofit sector. Private philanthropy has been an important part of our state's—and our Nation's—past, present, and future, and it needs to be encouraged. The resolution sends a valuable message to the Virginia nonprofit community that lawmakers appreciate their hard work and want to do everything possible to support their efforts."

The Alliance for Charitable Reform is encouraged by Florida and Virginia's leadership on these issues and is actively planning to continue its work in other states.

"Charitable foundations are doing so much good work in our communities," said Sue Santa, Senior Vice President for Public Policy of The Philanthropy Roundtable. "The recent actions taken in Florida and Virginia show that state legislators are increasingly appreciative of that work, and that they are serious about protecting the rights of their citizens who are trying to help others through charitable giving."

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The Alliance for Charitable Reform is a project of The Philanthropy Roundtable, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. ACR represents charitable organizations, including private foundations, family foundations, and public charities.