8-9-2007

"Rural Philanthropy" (1)

Max S. Baucus

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.
Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/baucus_speeches

Recommended Citation
Baucus, Max S., "Rural Philanthropy" (1) (August 9, 2007). Max S. Baucus Speeches. 797.
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/baucus_speeches/797

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives and Special Collections at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Max S. Baucus Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
Senator * or Department*: BAUCUS

Instructions:
Prepare one form for insertion at the beginning of each record series.
Prepare and insert additional forms at points that you want to index.
For example: at the beginning of a new folder, briefing book, topic, project, or date sequence.

Record Type*: Speeches & Remarks

MONTH/YEAR of Records*: August-2007
(Example: JANUARY-2003)

(1) Subject*: Federal Issues
(select subject from controlled vocabulary, if your office has one)

(2) Subject* Rural Philanthropy

DOCUMENT DATE*: 08/09/2007
(Example: 01/12/1966)

* "required information"
Opening Thanks

Welcome to Montana. Thank you for gathering here to craft a philanthropy agenda for rural America.

I thank my former Colleague in Congress Steve Gunderson. And I thank the Council on Foundations for convening the first-ever conference on philanthropy in rural America. Thank you for committing staff and resources to this important undertaking. Thank you for your leadership.

I also thank the Montana Community Foundation, the Montana Nonprofit Association, the Big Sky Institute for the Advancement of Nonprofits, and the Montana Community Development Corporation. They have contributed great leadership, partnership, and vision.

Rural America

The 18th Century poet William Cowper celebrated “rural sights” and “rural sounds.” He wrote that they “exhilarate the spirit, and restore the tone of . . . nature.”

We’re here today to celebrate the opportunities and address the challenges for philanthropy in rural America. As you know, rural America comes up short in philanthropic assets, support structures, and grants. It’s a complex problem. And it requires a thoughtful response.

But I also believe that it’s an issue of fairness. So thank you for responding to the challenge.

Rural Montana

You’ve been in Missoula for a few days now. I hope that you have seen some rural sights and rural sounds. I hope that you have seen something to exhilarate the spirit, and restore your nature.

You may have learned by now that we here in Montana are very proud of our state. Some say that we’re as proud of Montana as Texans are of Texas. We’re just not as loud about it.

I understand that yesterday you took the opportunity to get out and see more of the state. Some of you drove east to Seeley Lake. Some of you went north to Arlee and Camp Vandenberg. Some of you headed to Helena. A few of you flew east to Lewistown or northwest to Libby. And a group of you flew to Browning on Monday.

I expect that you met some of Montana’s friendly people. And I hope that what you learned will inform your discussions this afternoon.

I hope that you have enjoyed some good Montana beef. And I hope you tasted some good Montana beer.

I hope you’ll stay a few days. Spend some time fishing Montana’s famous trout streams. Or hike or bike in the public lands. Visit with people in the coffee shops or on the trails.
summit will help to equip those who are doing great things for their communities with resources and connections. With these tools, they can better affect their communities — which are often rural — throughout Montana.

You are here today to take up the challenge of building a rural philanthropy agenda for the 21st Century. And I am committed to working hard for rural America alongside you.

Four Challenges

So this afternoon, as you build a plan for Rural Philanthropy, let me encourage you to consider four challenges.

First, consider making it a priority to work together with local, state and regional partners.

Second, consider investing in local community foundations.

Third, consider investing in rural nonprofit infrastructure.

And fourth, consider revising your guidelines for investment to accommodate rural organizations.

Partnering

First, I want to emphasize the importance of partnering. I challenge you to work together with other foundations, with government leaders, with local businesses, with nonprofit associations, and with local nonprofits.

Let's talk about a current issue where government, foundations, and non-profits can partner. Before I left Washington, the Senate passed a Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act by a margin of 68-31.

One-fifth of our nation’s neediest children live in rural areas, and one-third of these children now rely on CHIP and Medicaid for health care. The CHIP Reauthorization Act will improve access to health coverage for millions of children in rural America. The bill strengthens CHIP funding for the next five years and gives states incentives to find and enroll hard-to-reach low-income children.

That’s where you come in. The CHIP bill includes $80 million in new federal grants for states to promote outreach to vulnerable populations, like rural children. These new grants will give state organizations and non-profit community groups a shot in the arm to find uninsured children.

You can partner with Congress and the states in several ways. Help us identify the best ways to reach eligible but uninsured children. Support those community organizations that are doing good work to identify and enroll kids. Perhaps match dollar-for-dollar these CHIP grants to organizations that produce good results.

The CHIP legislation still faces some hurdles before it becomes law. Perhaps you have other ideas for reaching out to provide health care for our children.

So here’s my challenge on partnering. We can partner on many issues like I am confident we will on children’s health care. As you begin developing an agenda for rural philanthropy this afternoon, I encourage you to invite feedback from local communities and nonprofit organizations in rural states around the country.

And I encourage you to consider hosting roundtable discussions or local town-hall meetings in 5 or 10 rural states on the agenda that you assemble. I urge you to incorporate their feedback into your plans.
Barriers to Nonprofits

My fourth challenge is to urge you to address the challenges that constrain national foundations from making grants to rural states.

New research conducted by the Big Sky Institute analyzed grant-making in rural states for 2000 through 2004. It shows that total funding from national foundations to rural states declined during those years. It fell from $104 million in 2000 to $96 million in 2004.

Here are some examples of barriers that nonprofits in Montana and other rural states have found:

First, funding guidelines are too often written in a way that requires programs or organizations to have already achieved a high level of development, including sophisticated partnerships and alliances. But rural programs often need funding to navigate these crucial developmental stages.

Second, funding guidelines too often prioritize programs that affect large numbers of people rather than large rural regions with smaller populations. Successful rural nonprofits often affect smaller numbers of people across wide land areas. Often an effective organization in Montana will affect a 5 or 6 county region. And that’s worth supporting too.

Third, too often applications are turned down based on perceptions that the applicant organizations lack the capacity needed to manage the scale and complexity of program activities. I applaud recent grants by both the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Ford Foundation to programs in Montana. These foundations invested in helping to build the capacities of high-caliber nonprofits. They thus helped to enable these organizations to increase staffing, internal capabilities, and effectiveness.

These are good strategies. And I hope your work this afternoon will identify additional strategies that make sense for national funders.

Conclusion

You are rural philanthropy’s best advocates. So I urge you to collaborate with the public and private sectors. Work with your partners in philanthropy — the nonprofit sector and local communities. Invest in the support structures that make possible community philanthropy and thriving nonprofit sectors in rural areas. I challenge you to encourage your organizations and other grant-makers to fund rural states projects. And I commit to partner with you and support good policies that empower the good work that you do.

I urge you to bring back to your homes some of the rural sights and rural sounds that you have experienced. I hope that you can bring back memories of some experiences that exhilarate the spirit. And together, let us redouble our efforts to work for rural America.