

# The Vital Role of Nonprofits in Our New Normal

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Naturally, the public sector at the national, state and local levels is playing a lead role in the United States to ameliorate the scourge of the coronavirus.

The private, for-profit sector has responded admirably by producing more of the goods they normally produce or retooling to make essential goods to help fight the virus.

What about the nonprofit sector?

While we are not out of the woods for a calamity not seen by most of us, we're beginning to see the cautious re-opening of several states. As millions of Americans step outside from their homes for the first time in many months, they will be excited to get back to work and school, reconnect with family and friends, and feel a part of a community once more.

We are poised to expand beyond temporal matters!

Whatever our new normal is — and that is a very personal question — government and private industry alone cannot solve the many challenges that await us outside our doors.

Among the many challenges that surely await us are:

— Reduction in workforce in many industries. Not every business will be able to readily adapt to social distancing. This will include the events, entertainment, higher education, sports, retail, restaurant and even ride-share businesses.

Ironically, even healthcare organizations will be affected. Simply put, millions of workers now unemployed will find that their former jobs are no longer there.

— Mental health issues understandably will be exacerbated. Families affected by illness and death, individuals experiencing job loss, those who have lost their homes will need assistance in navigating post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, drug addiction, even suicide ideation.

— We will find new ways to deliver education and training at all levels and with all groups.

— New meaning will be given to how we enjoy the arts, culture and entertainment.

Nonprofits have long served as a third sector of American life. Providing programs, services and goods to millions of people, nonprofits continue to serve as the essential third part of the three-legged stool that supports our civil society.

While government or private industry do their part, nonprofits enlist the support of volunteers and trained professionals to enable us to meet our healthcare, training and educational, social service, and arts and cultural needs in creative and cost-efficient ways.

To be a functioning society and approach any sense of normalcy, we will need to train people for new jobs, educate our children, feed the hungry, house the homeless, and tend to myriad social challenges. Nonprofits have that expertise at the ready.

Nonprofits, however, cannot do it alone.

Just as with other industries, nonprofits have been forced to shutter, furloughing millions of employees. These employees are critical to the healing our nation. The CARES Act is a step in the right direction, but much more is needed.

Philanthropy by foundations, corporations, and individuals will go a long way to stabilize the sector. Government can also provide additional incentives as organizations must adapt to doing business in accordance to emerging health standards.

More tax incentives for donors will be needed. More volunteers will be needed. Nonprofits pump hundreds of millions of dollars into our national economy.

Significant time has been given to news accounts, pundits and experts espousing who is responsible for what during this crisis. Since the founding of our country, the health of the people has depended on the spirit of fraternity that is operationalized via charity.

Nonprofits have been and will continue to be in the business of improving the human condition.

Nonprofits are more than able and motivated to fulfill their time-honored role in making sure America is a great place to live, work and learn.

Let's give these organizations the assistance they need to get back to work.

#### About the Author

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