



Helping Connecticut Nonprofits Help Connecticut

by Ron Cretaro, Connecticut Association of Nonprofits

Presence, influence, clout, and credibility are all elements of a successful public policy program. For CT Nonprofits, being the identified voice of nonprofits in Connecticut carries a huge responsibility beyond our more than five hundred members.

One of our overarching goals is to “make the world safe for nonprofits.” This most recent legislative session, now adjourned, challenged us to an even greater degree to achieve that reality. Protecting resources and funding for the vast number of programs and services was a paramount priority in this difficult fiscal climate.

revolving loans (HB 5435, Section 6). CT Nonprofits’ staff had major input into Certificate of Need legislation; staff of the CT Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet, which is hosted by CT Nonprofits, guided SB 316, *An Act Creating a Commission on Nonprofit Health & Human Services* through the House and Senate unanimously.

It starts with our educational programs on advocacy through the Center for Professional Development and our fall Public Policy series on various topics – e.g. health care, state election law, cost accounting standards for state contracting organizations. We then proceed to organizing local member meetings with Legislative leaders. Prior to the 2010 legislative session, gatherings were held in Mansfield, New Haven (with over 50 organizations attending) and New Britain.

Once the Legislative session began, we coordinated two weeks of Nonprofit Week at the Capitol where 100 members displayed exhibits to inform legislators and staff about their missions and work. In April, we held our annual Legislative reception with an all-time record number of legislators attending including House Speaker Chris Donovan and Senate



CT Nonprofits Week at the Capitol provides 100 members with a chance to showcase their missions and inform legislators and staff about their work.

President Don Williams. Three of our staff – Liza, Julia and Ron – are registered lobbyists along with our contract lobbyists Patrick McCabe and P.J. Cimini of Capitol Strategies.

CT Nonprofits has accomplished much for nonprofits in the past several decades notably:

- The first bonding program for nonprofits in 1983
- Supplemental fuel assistance funds in 1980 & 2007
- Expanding the cost-of-living increases to all contracting nonprofits, not only unionized nonprofits in 1994
- Inclusion of Departments of Correction, Social Services and Public Health contracting organizations in cost-of-living increases
- Purchase of Service legislation resulting

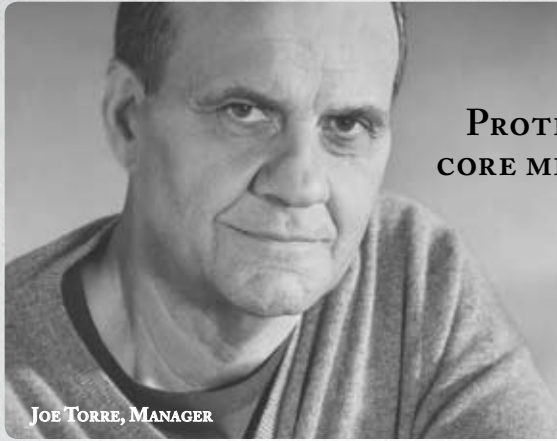


From left to right: Rose Alma Senatore, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Hartford; Representative Bryan Hurlburt (D-Tolland); Peter DeBiasi, Access Community Action Agency

This year our public policy staff worked in many areas primarily to protect funding for essential health & human services and education programs, as well as funding for arts & culture. CT Nonprofits staff testified on more than 20 bills and issues before the General Assembly this past session, as well as assisted members in the preparation of their testimony. We advocated for the inclusion of nonprofits in the General Assembly’s jobs legislation. As a result, nonprofits are eligible for small business



From left to right: John Merz, CT AIDS Resource Coalition; Cathy Zeiner, Women’s Center of Southeastern CT; Senator Don DeFronzo (D-New Britain); Ron Cretaro, CT Nonprofits



JOE TORRE, MANAGER

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from the Commission to Effect Government Reorganization

- Charitable Solicitation reform favorable to nonprofits
- Clarifying statutes to protect the property tax exemption for residential and transitional housing
- Commission on Health & Human Services to look at long term funding solutions in 2008 (eventually vetoed by the Governor)
- Increasing the legal audit threshold for all nonprofits
- Nonprofit Collaboration Incentive Grant program with \$5 million in bonding funds in 2009

Your participation is crucial to our efforts. We cannot hope to achieve our goals without your involvement, as we are only as effective as the advocacy and support of our members. We may be a voice, but our members are the hands, feet and spirit which propel us to accomplish great things to realize the power of nonprofits. Join us in our efforts to protect and advance nonprofits so that our voice may be amplified and together we may carry our goals to completion. ■



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