



**Comments to the Board of Directors of the Corporation for
National & Community Service from
Susan Sanow, Virginia Network of Nonprofit Organizations (VANNO)
at the Public Listening Session on May 20, 2009, Washington, DC**

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for giving me this opportunity to address this public meeting. My name is Susan Sanow and I am the Deputy Executive Director of the Center for Nonprofit Advancement, here in Washington, D.C. I also serve as a member of the board of directors of the Virginia Network of Nonprofit Organizations. Both CNA and VANNO are part of a national network of statewide nonprofit associations focused on building the capacity of nonprofits in their respective states.

In Virginia, where I live, as many as 40,000 organizations, fill basic human needs—food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, and safety—as well as provide education, job training, health care, day care, emergency services, recreation, and cultural and environmental amenities. We are thankful for the resources being provided for the Serve America Act that will assist in enhancing these organizations’ capacity to efficiently and effectively meet needs and impact the communities they serve.

Associations like CNA and VANNO serve as conduits to the broader nonprofit sector—keeping local nonprofits aware of policy and compliance issues, best practices, and opportunities for resources. Indeed, many nonprofits in both Virginia and DC have come to regard both of these organizations as the “look to” source for this kind of information. To that end, I encourage you, as you seek to develop guidelines and timelines for the disbursement of this federal funding that you look to CNA and VANNO, as well as their counterparts in 39 other states, to assist you in this endeavor. I

also ask that you consider these state associations as your “communication partners”, assisting you in informing nonprofits of the opportunities and requirements for this funding.

The organizations which stand to most benefit from this support—those with operating budgets of less than \$1 million—lack sufficient staff capacity to siphon through the myriad of communications that may come to them on a daily basis. Please look to us as the most efficient means to communicate with the broadest swath of the nonprofit sector.

Additionally, with respect to the Commonwealth of Virginia, where the challenge of geography makes it difficult for nonprofits statewide to have equal access to training, technology, and financial resources, I ask that you give specific consideration to the southwestern, southside, and eastern shore regions of the state. We ask that you consider proposals for funding that ensure the expansion of access to training, technology, and financial resources statewide and ensure the conveyance of workable models and best practices across the state.

Recent research in Virginia has affirmed that nonprofit organizations as important contributors to the state’s economic health and quality of life and justifies the need for them to be continually nurtured and supported. Again, thank you for the opportunity that the Serve America Act offers to do just that.

Thank you for your time today.

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