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Midterm Elections: More Rhetoric Than Reality?

Amy Hanauer, founding executive director of **Policy Matters Ohio**, Gregory L. Brown, executive director of **PolicyBridge**, and Gary Benjamin, Northeast Ohio advocacy coordinator for **Universal Health Care Network of Ohio** agree on two things: there is too much partisan rhetoric in the political process and Northeast Ohio nonprofits will face many uphill battles in the year ahead. We were pleased to welcome them to the Foundation Center on Friday, January 14, 2011 to explore what the midterms elections mean for Ohio's nonprofits.

Ms. Hanauer kicked off the discussion by focusing on the state's dwindling resources and the looming budget crisis and concluded, "for nonprofits, 2011 will mean more work and less money." As Ms. Hanauer sees it, an ongoing movement fueling rhetoric around tax cuts and the state legislature's ambition in making cuts a reality will result in less revenue and subsequent cuts in funding for human services and education. Countering the movement to cut taxes and revenue without a restoration plan in place is a coalition called **OneOhio Now**, which advocates for a balanced approach to building Ohio's budget through accountability, balanced tax responsibilities, and equity in personal income tax.

Do you know who recently gathered a group government stakeholders together and told them to either "get on the bus" of government reform or be run over by it? Newly elected Ohio Governor, John Kasich is credited with this statement, as reported by the **Columbus Examiner**. Gregory L. Brown used this example to illustrate that rhetoric, often violent and ideological in tone and intent, sidelines real conversations that need to take place around today's economic realities and the impact they are having on our ability to compete globally. Mr. Brown worries that investments in education at the Federal level may diminish and wonders who will tend to the needs of increasingly overworked and underfunded human service providers.

Offering a somewhat brighter outlook, Gary Benjamin predicts that national challenges and repeal efforts relating to health care reform will have limited effect. Mr. Benjamin went on to say that, judging by the new governor's advisor appointments, it appears that the new administration may support many of the basic tenets of the recently enacted health care law, such as a focus on primary care and reform of the payment structure.

All three panelists underlined the need for going beyond media headlines and political talking points to find real data on the decisions of our elected officials and the effects of those decisions on public policy and the economy.

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