

29th Annual The NonProfit Times 2026 NPT POWER & INFLUENCE Top 50

THESE LEADERS PROVED YOU CAN PLAY DEFENSE AND OFFENSE AT THE SAME TIME.

The nonprofit sector was on the edge of its proverbial seat at this point in 2025 while waiting for the implementation of elements of “*Mandate for Leadership 2025: The Conservative Promise*,” also known as “*Project 2025, Presidential Transition Project*.”

The demolition started with the federal government freezing or blocking grants. Next gone was international aid. Many federally funded food programs ceased, even though the funding had been approved by Congress. Attacks on diversity in employment and service provision mounted as 2025 rolled on.

Execution of *Project 2025* was the worst-case scenario for many organizations.

These 50 executives (actually 51, explanation below) were not just leaders at their organizations but trailblazers for the nonprofit sector as a whole. Their voices and actions blunted some of the attacks on the sector and people serviced by it. This year’s *The NonProfit Times’ Power & Influence Top 50* honorees, resisted, fought and built coalitions to continue to serve their communities, constituents and the nonprofit sector as a whole.

Some actions against the sector seemed deliberately designed to provoke panic, such as labeling some organizations that do international work as terror organizations.

Back to the 51 versus 50. One organization has co-founders and fairness compelled us to include both of them. You’ll have to turn the page to find out who we selected.

The ground-breaking work from many silos of the nonprofit community is why 21 individuals emerged this year who had not previously been included in *The NPT Power & Influence Top 50*. Four of this year’s honorees had previously been on the list but not recently. Women outnumber men among the honorees, 28 to 23, for the second consecutive year.

The honorees will gather at The National Press Club this fall for the *20th Power & Influence Top 50 Gala*. This is the 29th annual list. The event was launched because many of the honorees’ paths had never crossed and several suggested the group be pulled together for a night.

Gala sponsors renew year after year, although their corporate names have evolved over time. The sponsors for this year’s gala include Bloomerang, Data Axle Nonprofit, Dataro, GoFundMe PRO, JMT Consulting, Momentive Software and Moore.

The honorees will receive their awards at the event and one honoree will receive the *Influencer of the Year* honor.

BY PAUL CLOLERY

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The 2026 NPT POWER & INFLUENCE Top 50

Paige Alexander

Chief Executive Officer
The Carter Center
Atlanta, Georgia

Alexander is a worldwide influencer for civil society cohesion. She has expanded the Carter Center's mission to include the global mental health crisis, political polarization in the U.S., and the impact of climate change on global peace and public health. That expansion now includes election monitoring in the U.S., especially Georgia, Montana, New Mexico and Nevada.



Richard R. Buery, Jr.

Chief Executive Officer
Robin Hood
New York, New York

Buery's vision and collaborative bent has spanned the nonprofit sector and government. He sits on too many influential boards to list here. He has launched, built and expanded nonprofits since his college days. While his experience has focused on youth, Buery is the definition of social entrepreneurship and leadership, on the micro level locally and macro level with the Council on Foreign Relations.

Tonya Allen

President
McKnight Foundation
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Allen has been the champion behind much of the organizing of foundations to protect fundamental rights. She was on the frontlines in Minneapolis during ICE's immigration roundup there. If you haven't read her "Radical Love: The Responsibility of Community Philanthropy in Enabling Social Change, Promoting Equity and Sparking Transformation," you need to do so.



Claire Casey

President
AARP Foundation
Washington, D.C.

People have longed for the magic retirement number of 65. Now it is likely that some lower-income people will not have regular employment after age 50. Casey is laser-focused on those workers, going beyond direct service to advocate for reshaping systems. She's using the courts, filing cases involving critical issues such as bias in AI technology that unfairly discriminates against older job applicants.

Ramsey Alwin

President and CEO
National Council on Aging
Arlington, Virginia

A member of the executive committee of nonprofit executive problem-solving Leadership 18, Alwin champions the idea that longevity is a "megatrend" that requires modern policy and societal shifts. She works with the World Economic Forum's Longevity Economy Steering Committee and advocates for the "longevity economy," backing policies such as the Measuring American Poverty Act.



Kendra Davenport

President and CEO
Easterseals
Chicago, Illinois

Some executives have lowered their profiles so their nonprofits won't be targeted by regulators. Davenport has ratcheted up her comments, reflecting her history as a candid, clear, transparent, collaborative, and accountable advocate. Her words: "Overly broad allegations of fraud, waste and abuse should not be used to disguise massive cuts to Medicaid that will hurt millions of hardworking Americans."

Alice Ayres

President and CEO
Association for Healthcare Philanthropy
Arlington, Virginia

When it comes to healthcare, philanthropy is not just nice, it's essential. Ayres is positioning philanthropy as a strategic business driver rather than just an add-on. The key to nonprofit healthcare survival is securing funding to support hospital innovations, patient care and caregiver well-being. Patients are customers and with her marketing background Ayres is convincing healthcare executives of that fact.



James Deutsch

Chief Executive Officer
Rainforest Trust
Warrenton, Virginia

Talk about transparency in activism: Prominently on Rainforest Trust's website is a link to an independent coordinator for raising grievances about staff, partners or supported projects. Deutsch and his collaborators effectively advocated for significant Indigenous-led conservation. The efforts resulted in a shift to co-governance, land rights and tech-enabled monitoring.

Lawson R. Bader

President and CEO
DonorsTrust
Alexandria, Virginia

What donor-advised funds will and won't support has become a hot issue, but Bader has been steadfast. He ensures that DonorsTrust promotes charities that address civic concerns without advocating for an increase in the scope and scale of government. His influence on and support of the Atlas Network (and its 500 think tank partners) and the State Policy Network supports work on impact issues.



Kathleen Enright

President and CEO
Council on Foundations
Washington, D.C.

You might not expect this type of language from a foundation leader: "We do ourselves a disservice when we just focus on the big-dollar donation and not on the role that it played in combination with all the other actors that might have done something good for a community." Enright is at her best when fostering collaboration, which she does every day.

Nancy Brown

Chief Executive Officer
American Heart Association
Dallas, Texas

Brown transformed the American Heart Association into a global authority on cardiovascular and brainhealth, focusing on equitable health at the intersection of science, technology and public health. A deal-maker, American Heart Association Ventures invested in Neura Health and Ultromics as part of the \$75 million Go Red for Women Venture Fund and many others. Ask nicely and she'll probably demonstrate CPR.



Janiece Evans-Page

Chief Executive Officer
Tides Foundation and Network
San Francisco, California

Evans-Page is all about shifting power and disrupting social justice philanthropy. She is funding getting the sector ready for the election cycle as part of the All By April Campaign, Healthy Democracy Fund and the Collective Action Funds. She loudly backed the embattled Southern Poverty Law Center, with which Tides has worked for years on projects such as Vote Your Voice. She doesn't flinch.

Phil Buchanan

President
Center For Effective Philanthropy
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Buchanan uses a data-driven approach to improving the effectiveness of foundations and nonprofits, pushing to abandon the so-called "business approach" to running organizations in favor of measures that take into consideration the complexities of running a nonprofit these days. The research coming out of the CEP right now is heavy on defending the sector while others keep their heads low.



Kelly Fitzsimmons

Founder and CEO
Project Evident
Boston, Massachusetts

The work Fitzsimmons and Project Evident are doing to support the ethical use of AI is impressive. They pull together organizations and help leaders think through governance, portability and agency -- not just using AI as if it's a "software as a service." She has held leadership roles at multiple innovative nonprofits, so this focus is not new for her. She is always thinking about the whole sector.

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Alesia Frerichs

President and CEO
Lutheran Services in America
Washington, D.C.

Lutheran Services in America was one of the first nonprofits under federal fire during the recent targeting of charities. Frerichs stood tall, serving as a prototype for leaders at other embattled nonprofits. That's vital when your work impacts an estimated one in 50 people in more than 1,400 communities. The organization's "Here We Stand" Medicaid-supporting initiative showcased a national playbook.



Robin R. Ganzert

President and CEO
American Humane Society
Washington, D.C.

Ganzert leads an organization that dramatically expanded its global reach to protect, care for or rescue more than 1.6 billion animals through welfare certifications, conservation initiatives, and disaster rescue deployments. She has also made stars of them with American Humane Hero Dog Awards, No Animals Were Harmed, and supporting anti-poaching and rewilding efforts in 62 countries.



Daniel H. Gillison, Jr.

Chief Executive Officer
National Alliance on Mental Illness
Arlington, Virginia

Gillison modernized the nation's largest grassroots mental health nonprofit, built cross-sector coalitions and secured investments from donors, including MacKenzie Scott, who gifted \$59 million. He launched the National Collaborative for Crisis Systems Innovation, a hub for alignment, learning and action in behavioral health crisis care to strengthen the 988 Suicide and Crisis helpline program.



John Hewko

CEO and General Secretary
Rotary International
Evanston, Illinois

Hewko and Rotary are already in most neighborhoods in the U.S., and now he's working through transitioning the network from traditional charity and volunteer models to strategic public-private partnerships and corporate social responsibility initiatives. He views Rotary as a platform where business leaders and Rotary's 1.4 million members can leverage their skills for sustainable development.



Brian Hooks

Chairman and CEO
Stand Together/Charles Koch Foundation
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Hooks emphasizes partnerships in philanthropy and bridging divides, so it is no surprise he is one of the leaders of NextLadder Ventures, a \$1 billion initiative focused on removing barriers and expanding economic opportunity. Another example is the "Be The People" coalition campaign, which intends to show there is more that unites than divides Americans.



Derrick Johnson

President and CEO
NAACP
Baltimore, Maryland

Johnson is always out front on the nation's most pressing social issues. He takes on the powerful and is one of the few leaders who can talk legacy while looking to the future. His description of democracy being under a stress test is a clear call for action, which can come in many forms. His words: "Joy and laughter is a part of advocacy."



Sarah Kastelic

Executive Director
National Indian Child Welfare Association
Portland, Oregon

Kastelic spearheads tribal capacity building, national policy advocacy and efforts for the protection of Indigenous children. She is a national thought leader and has served on cross-sector boards such as Independent Sector, BoardSource, Generations United and the Children's Funding Project. Kastelic has championed a 25-year commitment to reform tribal and state child welfare systems.



Kent Kramer

President and CEO
Goodwill Legacy Group
Indianapolis, Indiana

Kramer is the R.H. Macy of nonprofit retail. He expanded a network of 23 stores in a 28-county area of Indiana to 91 secondhand locations in central and southern Indiana, central Illinois and Puerto Rico. He led the nationwide scaling of The Excel Center, a tuition-free adult high school model that has expanded to dozens of locations across the country.



Leah Greenberg/Ezra Levin

Co-founders and Co-executive directors
Indivisible
Washington, D.C.

The husband-and-wife honorees had a busy year. In 2025, Indivisible recruited and empowered tens of thousands of activists and led a coalition of progressive groups in facilitating three of the five largest single-day protests in American history. Indivisible has more than 3,000 units around the U.S. They continued codifying and distributing guides for recruitment, training, fundraising and activism.



Jody Levison-Johnson

President and CEO
Social Current
Sturtevant, Wisconsin

There's no doubt Levison-Johnson's social work background has been in use lately. Not loud and flashy, she's become one of the people who brings sensible, level-headed approaches to promoting and protecting nonprofit purpose. Her ability to find a way to be sane while all around the sector is unbalanced is what makes her opinions sought after.



Michael McAfee

Chief Executive Officer
PolicyLink
New York, New York

McAfee was key to securing permanent federal program funding for Promise Neighborhoods, improving outcomes for more than 300,000 children. When it comes to urban investment, he facilitated billions for neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. McAfee pushes leaders to act as founders of a new, just nation rather than simply managing existing systems.



Shannon McCracken

President and CEO
The Nonprofit Alliance
Washington, D.C.

McCracken has the organization punching above its weight class. She hears what is being discussed that will damage the sector and constructs a rapid response, such as when the Combined Federal Campaign was going to be shut down, just days before launch and after all fees had been paid. Pulling together organizations for a coordinated response is her forte.



Suzanne McCormick

President and CEO
YMCA of the USA
Chicago, Illinois

Home, work and Y: McCormick is striving to make Ys a community hub while updating programs for its next 175 years. She was talking about social isolation before most leaders, and is promoting "Y-Cons," celebrity and athlete influencers who got their starts at a local Y. The focus is on participating in resilient community systems, such as working with the Team Up Project.



Janet Murguía

President and CEO
UnidosUS
Washington, D.C.

Murguía is operationalizing not just the 300 member units of UnidosUS but also other national and local organizations to protect voting rights and overall civil rights. She is the go-to person on Capitol Hill when it comes to the Latino voice. She is also looking to the future, working to ensure that civil rights for all communities are considered as AI tightens its grip on the web and social media.



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Michael Murray

President

Arthur Vining Davis Foundations
Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

Too many DEI efforts are dominated by a demonize, demean, divide approach. Civil discourse efforts retain the best of what DEI was meant to be. Murray is the most important foundation leader in that space. He's nurtured key nonprofits such as BridgeUSA and the Constructive Dialogue Institute. He's pulled together major funder collaboratives with nonprofits such as the Lumina Foundation.



John Palfrey

President

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Chicago, Illinois

The Dow keeps hitting records and Palfrey is using, in his words, some of the "excess growth" to fund what the federal government is cutting. There's an extra \$10 million in new grants to strengthen various fields of the humanities. Palfrey has been one of the most articulate voices defending the sector and is backing up his words with funding -- lots of it. His tone is steady but there is fire behind it.



Eboo Patel

Founder and President

Interfaith America
Chicago, Illinois

Patel has grown Interfaith America into a \$20 million nonprofit that partners with universities, businesses and governments. He advocates for pluralism, where religious diversity is treated as a bridge for cooperation rather than a barrier. He received the George W. Bush Institute Citation for leaders who have made a significant impact, and has inspired others to address pressing challenges.



Skye L. Perryman

President and CEO

Democracy Forward
Washington, D.C.

Perryman must channel the late NFL owner Al Davis -- "Just Win" -- because that is all she and her team do. There is no doubt the sector would be in significantly worse financial trouble if Perryman and her team didn't fight and win against federal funding freezes and for election integrity data privacy and against warrantless arrests.



Steven C. Preston

President and CEO

Goodwill Industries International
Rockville, Maryland

Preston has helped to modernize the GII network to compete with the growing private sector thrift industry. It's not just stores. He's doing that while expanding the impact of workforce training and development. Re-entry programs for roughly 60,000 formerly incarcerated people annually, have an astoundingly low 5% year-one recidivism rate.



Kevin Prindiville

Executive Director

Justice In Aging
Oakland, California

Prindiville is a visionary leader who has amassed an extremely talented staff. As a litigation and policy advocacy organization working on behalf of low-income older adults in perilous times, he and his staff are doing deeply challenging work, especially in ensuring health system access that is free from discrimination and fully addresses the health care needs of older adults.



Rip Rapson

President and CEO

The Kresge Foundation
Troy, Michigan

Rapson needs a T-shirt that reads "Act Local." Moving is expensive. In Kresge's case it's \$180 million invested in a shift from Troy to Detroit. The planned 2028 move will boost Kresge's focus on housing stabilization, home ownership, commercial corridor revitalization and public space enhancements. A resilience hub supporting people during emergencies is part of his place-based philanthropy.



Jonathan T.M. Reckford.

Chief Executive Officer

Habitat For Humanity International
Atlanta, Georgia

In this day of two sides battling over, well, everything, Reckford has found a way to stay above the fray, building communities and finding threads upon which everyone can agree (often grudgingly). He is an influential voice when it comes to community building and serves as the overall sector as chair of Leadership 18. He last year led Habitat to work in 70 countries, impacting three million lives.



Carmen Rojas

President and CEO

Marguerite Casey Foundation
Seattle, Washington

From mission-aligned investing questioning outdated notions of foundational perpetuity, Rojas is proving foundations can do more to protect against a corpse of a charitable sector. Her words: "Foundations can continue to be well-intentioned observers, or take action, shoulder-to-shoulder, with those working for transformation from the ground up." And, she is willing to foot the bill.



Alexander Roque

President and Executive Director

Ali Forney Center
New York, New York

Time of day means little to tired, unhoused LGBTQ kids who need a safe place, especially in major cities that are trying to block the ability of 24-hour drop-in centers to give a kid a hot meal and a cot. Roque has developed model on-site programs such as a residential treatment program that addresses both housing and mental health needs for LGBTQ youth.



Douglas Rutzen

President and CEO

International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
Washington, D.C.

Throw a dart at a map of anywhere in the world where democracy and the charitable sector are in peril and Rutzen has been there helping to work through the issues. Just being there is one thing. Thanks to Rutzen's worldwide network of leaders who trust him, he anticipates and plans for trouble often years in advance of the issues emerging.



Miguel Santana

President and CEO

California Community Foundation
Los Angeles, California

Santana worked in government and knows its failings, thus is an example of how foundations can successfully champion affordable housing, safety for immigrants and economic development. He brought together nonprofits, business groups and unions to exempt new multifamily and commercial development from taxes for 15 years. Santana is the gold standard of getting into good trouble.



Allison Sesso

President and CEO

Undue Medical Debt
New York, New York

While you can count the more than \$40 billion in people's debt she has evaporated since 2020, what you can't accurately calculate is the ripple effect throughout nonprofit healthcare service delivery. There are deals in place with at least 25 state and local governments and she launched a research agenda with the University of Chicago Urban Labs to study the root causes of the medical debt crisis.

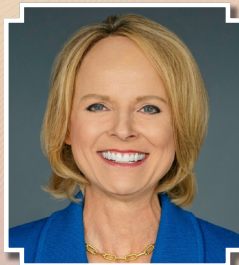


Jennifer Sirangelo

President and CEO

Points of Light
Atlanta, Georgia

Sirangelo is leading the "Reimagining Service 2035" initiative with the aim of doubling the number of volunteers to 150 million. There's a plan, starting with 12 strategic priorities to bridge the gap between individual passion and organizational capacity. Always future focused, she is advocating for the recognition of digital activism, such as social media campaigns, as valid forms of volunteering.



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H. Art Taylor

President and CEO
Association Of Fundraising Professionals
Arlington, Virginia

Along with running the world's largest association of fundraisers, Taylor is teaming with other leaders to rein in the power of giving platforms that are more about corporate cashflow on the backs of charities than making the donations quickly available to be put to work. Taylor isn't anti-tech. He knows that tech has become a cornerstone of effective fundraising and a powerful signal of belonging.



Amy Weaver

Chief Executive Officer
Direct Relief
Santa Barbara, California

Weaver becomes influential in every industry in which she is involved. The nonprofit space is no exception. The former president of Salesforce strengthened advocacy, collaboration and the leadership team in roughly a year. She leverages her experience building and scaling corporate teams to expand Direct Relief's ability to deliver on mission, which she describes as a "moral imperative."

Nicholas A. Tedesco

President and CEO
National Center for Family Philanthropy
Washington, D.C.

Tedesco advocates for bold systemic changes within family philanthropy networks, giving laser focus to trust-based philanthropy, racial justice and equity and next-gen engagement. Everyone worries about the next philanthropists. Under Tedesco, NCFP has become a national hub for blueprints for integrating family members into governance models to cultivate healthy, long-term stewardship of wealth.



Marnie Webb

Chief Executive Officer
TechSoup
San Francisco, California

Webb won't stop until every inch of the world has access to tech on equal footing. She leads an organization that facilitates collaboration on getting chief technology officers into small organizations and place-based partnerships leveraging data. AI and technology to improve outcomes for children and families are just two of her important partnerships.

Victoria Vrana

Chief Executive Officer
GlobalGiving
Washington, D.C.

Her words: "Generosity doesn't just move through individuals — it moves through the communities we come together to build." Some \$45 million made its way via the Community Aid Fund to 100 countries most effected by government cuts. To Vrana, it's not systems, but people holding the line, together. She leads the financial reaction that has saved desperate communities around the world.



Bennett Weiner

President and CEO
BBB Wise Giving Alliance
Arlington, Virginia

Some leaders at sector "watchdog" groups shout, mistaking loud for relevance. That's not Weiner. He is steady and respected, and emphasizes using technology, such as the digital evaluation platform, to maintain donor trust and charitable accountability. He spearheaded initiatives such as "AskGive," a conversational AI tool designed to help donors navigate vetted charity content.

Akilah Watkins

President and CEO
Independent Sector
Washington, D.C.

There is no question that Watkins has made Independent Sector relevant again when it comes to national issues and defense of the sector. She strikes the right balance between being collaborative while best positioning civil society. The organization had gotten off track from its roots. She understands you can't shun funders and expect the advocacy to continue. It's about collaboration.



Diane Yentel

President and CEO
National Council of Nonprofits
Washington, D.C.

Yentel is not shy about using litigation to defend the rights of nonprofits against government entities at all levels that are attempting to damage essential rights organizations and for-profits profiteering on the sector. She has strengthened the national profile of state associations where most of the hard work is really accomplished before problems bubble to the national level.

Pictures From Last Year's Top 50 Gala

