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“Head on a Swivel” Advocacy

We regularly tell audiences that public policy is forged in all three levels of government - federal, state, and local - and all three branches of government - legislative, executive, and judicial. While most people think of policymaking and advocacy opportunities in the legislative branch, policy can sometimes arise even faster in the executive branch through regulatory changes or in the judicial branch through decisions.

Good advocates know that any bill, regulation, or court decision could greatly affect - positively or negatively - their communities and spread to other state and local governments. Thus, one must have their head on a swivel at all times.

Last week's Inauguration was a prime example. At a time when many legislatures were gaveling into session and state advocates were focused on hundreds of bill filings, the Oval Office (and Capital One Arena) took center stage. Signing dozens of executive orders covering a broad range of issues within hours of being sworn in, President Trump made policy affecting diversity, equity, and inclusion; government grants and contracts; civic engagement; immigration; certain nonprofit subsectors; and more.



While every [president uses the power](#) of executive orders to lay policy and bypass Congress to effectuate the force of law, the [sheer volume of executive orders](#) by President Trump at this early stage was unprecedented. As it pertains to nonprofits, swift signatures require swift analysis. See NCN's chart of [Executive Orders Affecting Charitable Nonprofits](#) for regular updates.

Beyond the immediate effects from the orders themselves, the ideas behind the policies can have far reaching influence and have already spread to local and state governments in a very short period of time. State lawmakers have begun considering legislation aligned with various executive orders, such as barring [diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings](#) and implementing immigration enforcement in [Mississippi](#), [Missouri](#), and [New Hampshire](#), just to name a few. Governors in [Florida](#) and [Tennessee](#), where the legislative calendars are later than other states, called special sessions to align state public policies to federal priorities. Plus, several of the [orders were immediately challenged](#) and, at the time of this writing, one [had already been blocked](#).

So, what should nonprofit leaders do? It's paramount that we all understand the real-life effects of the policies on those we serve. That's why we created a form for nonprofits to share their how the executive orders are impacting their missions. [Share your story now](#) to help us track the impacts on the sector.

As Diane Yentel, President and CEO of the National Council of Nonprofits [stated this morning](#), "... the National Council of Nonprofits will continue to closely monitor all executive, administrative, and congressional actions that impact nonprofit organizations and will take appropriate action to ensure these crucial organizations are able to continue their important work."

Ultimately, while this past week may have felt dizzying, nonprofit leaders need to continue to keep their heads on a swivel to advocate where needed to advance their missions.