

Even in the best of times, when peace and prosperity abound, it can be difficult to reconcile the urgent claims of global and national concerns with the daily work of community building at the local level. When times are considerably more challenging, however, as they are today, people who are promoting civic engagement in their communities may be forgiven for feeling as if they are trying to live in two parallel worlds. From a certain perspective, the vertiginous sense one gets in contemplating the chasm between the scope of personal agency and the scale of the problems claiming our attention is simply a common attribute of modern life, regardless of one's profession or line of work. But from the perspective of people engaged in trying to bring about political or social change, this disparity between agency and efficacy can be more personally confounding.

In some circumstances, individuals may decide that although the importance of the issues they have been working on has not changed, the emergence of new and perhaps more urgent issues compels them to shift the focus of their attention. Others may reflect on the linkages that run from the local to the national level and back, as well as on the cluster of interconnections that exist among issues on various levels, and take reassurance in Voltaire's advice in *Candide* to cultivate their own garden. Although we don't know a lot about how actions in communities affect and are affected by problems and events whose locus is elsewhere, we do know enough to say that the problems that concern us most will not be solved without engagement at all levels of our political system. It is with that firm conclusion in mind that we have designed the current issue of the *National Civic Review*.

One of the great joys about editing the *Review* is the opportunity it provides to share interesting ideas that might be unfamiliar to people who work in different areas. The articles in the current issue by Marc Mannes of the Search Institute and Joseph Connor of the Collaboratory for Community Support are good illustrations of this benefit. Both authors present intriguing perspectives on issues that overlap with a number of concerns shared by a wide-reaching and disparate audience. Tom Wolff's piece, reflecting on the present condition and future prospects of the Healthy Communities movement, does much the same. That being said, however, it is also a great pleasure to feature in this issue essays on political reform and local government by previous contributors. Keen-eyed readers of the *Review* may recognize Matt Farrey and James Svara from prior issues.

Even those who are new to our readership will detect the big changes that will be put in place with the next issue (and some might already notice that the "Note from the President" has become the "Note from the Editor"). With the publication of volume 92, number 3, the *Review* will move to an

eight-and-a-half by eleven format with a newly designed cover. On the inside, longer articles will run in two columns per page, and in the back of each issue there will be four departments—on political reform, local government, community building, and trends in civic engagement—for shorter pieces that will run in three columns. These departments have been chosen as a means for NCL to highlight topical analyses and developments in areas that are at the core of our mission. Because these columns will be shorter than the rest of the articles, the lead time required to write them should be substantially less than for the longer pieces. Each department will have an advisory editor who will assist in ensuring a steady flow of relevant pieces.

The *Review* is now in its ninety-second year of publication, hearkening back to the Progressive Era. The changes we are making should show that although we intend to conserve the traditions of our founding, we need not be conservative in our approach to change. As always, we invite comments from our readers and would very much like to hear what you think of the new design. There is much to be said for preferring substance to style, but there's nothing wrong with giving substance a little style.

ROBERT LOPER
EDITOR