

MANP

1. Please describe your personal and professional experiences with nonprofit organizations.

Aloha United Way, Honolulu, Hawaii. I spent several years as a member of an evaluation panel doing site visits of partner agencies and evaluating their contribution to the United Way goals. The panel I was on did miscellaneous social service agencies. This was a real eye-opener for me. I had been oblivious to the tremendous needs of the community, and did not know what role nonprofits played in providing services I thought were done by government.

The Outdoor Circle, Honolulu, Hawaii. The Outdoor Circle is Hawaii's oldest environmental organization and was well known for outlawing billboards, planting trees, preserving open space, and saving exceptional trees. I served as a board member and chair of the signs committee. This involved coordinating issues with Outdoor Circle branches, and testifying before the State Legislature and County Councils. I was one of several board members who were instrumental in getting the Outdoor Circle to form a 501(c)(4) public policy affiliate so we could benefit from IRS safe harbor provisions on lobbying. I served on the board of, and as president of, Na Leo Pohai, the public policy affiliate of the Outdoor Circle.

The Trust for the Preservation of Maine Industrial History and Technology, doing business as the Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad Co. and Museum, Portland, Maine. I served three years on the Board of Trustees, three months as the interim Executive Director, and as a member of the Executive Director search committee. Subsequent to that I served as Superintendent of the Railroad with responsibility for managing the operations and maintenance of the track, locomotives and rolling stock. My volunteer commitment during 2007 was 1406 hours. Currently I am the Education Director responsible for the quality of our historic interpretation, a member of the Collection Committee, a diesel engineer, and a conductor.

I am a graduate of the Portland History Docents program sponsored by several Portland area museums and historical organizations.

At this time I am also volunteering as a docent at the Portland Harbor Museum in South Portland, and as a lighthouse guide with the Spring Point Ledge Lighthouse Trust.

2. Please provide specific ways in which, if elected, you would partner with and strengthen the nonprofit sector to achieve the goals of your campaign.

One of things I learned in Hawaii was that nonprofits do many things for or on behalf of government and the public. Nonprofits engage in fundraising, and use volunteers, to supplement the monies they get to provide services. This public-private partnership greatly reduces the cost of these programs on the taxpayer, and must be expanded and encouraged.

I also know that the vast majority of nonprofits live hand to mouth. They have no cash cushion to get them through a time when payments are delayed or reduced. The State has an obligation to provide as much notice as possible of funding changes so nonprofits can engage in fundraising or plan for reducing expenses. The State also needs to act in good faith and pay their obligations in a timely manner. The worst example of this involves Maine's hospitals who are being intentionally underpaid and have been for several years. This is just wrong.

One survey I received from a public sector union asked:

As the state's 4th largest city, South Portland takes on the role of a "service center" for the region. Many of these providers are not required to pay local property tax. Would you favor a system that would have them pay a fair share toward city services?

The Hawaii legislature once held a hearing on taxing wealthy nonprofits (hospitals). Every nonprofit in the State went to testify against that bill since they correctly read the hand-writing on the wall – once the politicians start taxing they cannot stop, and the whole nonprofit sector was at risk. I remember a legislator pleading with the crowd "we just want to tax the wealthy nonprofits, not you." I do not plan to put myself in that situation.

The major reason I am running for election is to improve our State economy and create good-paying jobs with benefits. This is good for everyone, including the nonprofit sector. Increasing jobs and income will lead to more tax dollars available for programs, more disposable income for charitable contributions, and more time available for volunteer activities. A family working 3 or 4 part-time jobs to pay for health insurance has little time to volunteer to build someone a house or conduct tours at a museum.

Brian Durham
28 Grand Street
South Portland, ME 04106
207-450-8244