

Memorandum

Sherrilyn Ifill, Chair of U.S. Programs Board

Dear Board Members:

Our final board meeting of the year follows the completion of the U.S. Programs and OSF budget process. Since our September board meeting, the staff prepared a final budget that reflects the strategic priorities we identified at that meeting. I am deeply grateful to U.S. Programs Director Ken Zimmerman for his superb leadership during this process, and for the professionalism of our staff in crafting a budget that reduces U.S. Program's allocated spending by \$50 million, while maintaining the integrity of our programmatic initiatives.

During this meeting, we will return to a discussion of our city/state initiative – renamed for now as the Open Places Initiative. Ken and Diana Morris have worked in close collaboration on the development of a Request for Proposals that will go out to 16 places. A sub-group of the board has continued to weigh in on this process. This board meeting will provide all of us with an opportunity to offer input into this initiative.

We will also return to a discussion on our core grantees. This will be undertaken as part of a broader conversation about the design and implementation of key elements of our program. This includes a discussion of how best to manage our reserve fund.

The aftermath of the 2012 elections provides an important opportunity for us to assess our work in several key areas. Efforts by right-wing groups to step-up voter suppression in states throughout the country were met by many of our grantees, who engaged in vigorous litigation, advocacy and direct service efforts on behalf of the most vulnerable members of the electorate. It is now apparent that our robust and strategic support for voter protection was wisely undertaken and successful, both in elevating the public debate about threats to voting, and in equipping our grantees to work effectively together in preventing widespread disenfranchisement of eligible voters.

This meeting will include an opportunity for board and staff members to talk with some of our most effective and savvy grantees about their assessment of how challenges to voter suppression were met, and to engage with Latino leaders about opportunities for advancement of an ambitious and important agenda of equality issues.

Finally, as you know, this will be my final meeting as chair of the U.S. Programs board. In January, I will step down and Steve Coll will become chair. We will have an opportunity in Executive Session to talk about the transition and our plans for a board retreat in the spring.

I look forward to seeing you all next week in New York.

Best,

Sherrilyn Ifill