PLEASE JOIN US IN OFFERING A HEARTY WELCOME to Elise Westhoff, the new president of The Philanthropy Roundtable. She looks forward to meeting many of you—in person, by phone or on line, through hologram or telepathy if need be. Meantime, flip to the last page of this magazine for her inaugural President’s Note.

Adam Meyerson will stay on board for the next six months to aid in the transition. Under the apt headline “Philanthropy Freedom Fighter” the Chronicle of Philanthropy recently printed an interview with him. Here is an extract in which he reflects on his two-decade tenure at the Roundtable: “We’ve worked to protect the freedom to support an unpopular cause or to develop an untested and unconventional hypothesis, to participate in the political debate without fear of IRS harassment, to create a family foundation that will exist in perpetuity or to spend down, to choose your grantees, including in this time of ‘America First’ the freedom to give overseas. We’ve advanced one’s First Amendment right to give anonymously, and to protect the independence and action of donors and foundations.” For the full Q&A go to TinyURL.com/y99mnf6c

BAD TIMING. In an issue it assembled in February, the venerable left-wing magazine The Nation went after Bill Gates for working with pharmaceutical companies to develop new medicines. Progressives have been on a witch hunt against drug companies for years, but by the time this particular cover story was in mailboxes the downright deadly foolishness of that crusade was especially clear.

The article was titled “Bill Gates Gives to the Rich” and subtitled “His renowned charitable activities seem to serve mainly private interests, namely his own.” As we’ve been warning in this magazine, about a hundred journalists have written essays over the last year under more or less those same headings. One recent exemplar in the Washington Post was titled “Billionaires are playing savior now. But they broke the economy to begin with.”

That same story in The Nation included three paragraphs criticizing The Philanthropy Roundtable for defending the freedom to give of “the wealthiest Americans.” Actually, we defend everyone’s freedom to give, and constantly correct misinformation from philanthropy bashers by pointing out that 80 percent of all donations in the U.S. come from people who aren’t rich—see “No Giver is Safe” in this same department of our Spring 2020 issue (PhilMag.org/NoGiverSafe).

The Nation did get one thing right. It says we oppose “increasing pressures from some public officials and advocacy groups to subject private philanthropies to more uniform standards and stricter government regulation.” Yup, that’s us.

WINS IN THE STATES. In two actions supported by The Philanthropy Roundtable, Oklahoma’s House, Senate, and governor approved a new donor privacy law in May. That followed action at the end of March in Utah, where the governor signed a statute that’s us.

This spontaneous creation of civil society recently registered its 100,000th location. There are now Little Free Libraries promoting literacy and encouraging neighborhood in all 50 states, plus 108 countries around the world. And amidst the covid-19 lockdown, these mechanisms for community sharing took on another function in some places: a way of passing on nonperishable foods and other items needed by people in quarantine. Small is beautiful.

LET’S TALK ABOUT HOMESCHOOLING. How can we not, at a time when virtually all American children are being, essentially, homeschooled?

RealClear Opinion Research recently conducted
a national poll that asked a representative sample of parents: “Are you more or less likely to enroll your son or daughter in a homeschool, neighborhood homeschool co-op, or virtual school once the lockdowns are over?”

More likely said 41 percent of the public (versus 31 percent less likely). Among black respondents, over 50 percent said more likely, and among Asians it was even higher.

While hardly conclusive, this survey meshes with other evidence documenting public interest in homeschooling. Statistics released in December 2019 by the U.S. Department of Education showed that 1.7 million children were being schooled at home prior to the covid-19 outbreak. That included youngsters of all races and places, including a surge from Hispanic families.

**PAYOUT RATES** are something philanthropists often wrestle with when crises hit. Should foundations surge out more than the legally decreed 5 percent of their assets when society is struggling? When should funders dip into endowments to meet current needs? Should crisis grantmaking be an option every donor considers?

Some parties are currently petitioning Congress to require increased payout rates. There were 275 signatures on a May letter to Congress calling for an “Emergency Charity Stimulus” that would mandate 10 percent annual payout rates by foundations (double the current requirement) for the next three years, and also create a new 10 percent payout mandate for donor-advised funds. (While donor-advised funds do not currently have a mandated payout rate, they distribute, on average, 21 percent of their assets each year.)

Sandra Swirski of The Philanthropy Roundtable’s Alliance for Charitable Reform responded to those requesting the new rules this way: “We defend their right to ask other funders to see the world as they do, but demanding it is wrong. The Roundtable is encouraging its members to give generously in responding to this health and economic crisis, but we continue to oppose one-size-fits-all mandates.”

**THE TEMPLETON PRIZE AWARD** for 2020 is geneticist, Christian, and National Institutes of Health director Francis Collins. First awarded in 1973 to Mother Teresa, the $1.3 million accolade is given annually to an individual with high achievements in science and religion, “harnessing the power of the sciences to explore the deepest questions of the universe and humankind’s place and purpose within it.” It was Sir John Templeton’s first major philanthropic project. Collins is known for his leadership of the Human Genome Project and his books *The Language of God* and *Belief*.

**PHILMAG.ORG**, the companion website for this magazine, has created a fresh section covering news, people, and events relevant to philanthropy. Check out “Current News” at the top of our homepage for a stream of useful reporting in a bite-sized format. Several items will be posted each week, so visit regularly.

We’ve also created a new “Weekly Spotlight” section at the top of AlmanacOfPhilanthropy.org, the website where the full content of our authoritative *Almanac of American Philanthropy* is available for free access. You’ll find new content there every week that connects philanthropic achievements, people, history, and statistics to current events.

Both of these initiatives are overseen by Madeline Fry, who previously reported for the *Washington Examiner*. Send leads and ideas to Madeline at MFry@PhilanthropyRoundtable.org. And bookmark the sites!

**THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY** of the Constitutional amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote is August 18. You’ll see a burst of news stories about that milestone. It’s unlikely that many will tell you a vital truth...
about the accomplishment, however—the fact that female suffrage was propelled by private philanthropy, at moments when government and other parts of society showed no interest.

Joan Marie Johnson of the University of North Carolina has compiled a detailed, interesting book on how women’s right to vote was secured. It’s called Funding Feminism: Monied Women, Philanthropy, and the Women’s Movement, 1870–1967. We reviewed the book for this magazine’s Spring 2018 issue, and noted that the suffrage amendment was stalled until a handful of major donors agreed to pour money and time into the enterprise, jeopardizing their own reputations and resources in the process. Susan B. Anthony called private donations “the vital power of all movements—the wood and water of the engine.” She raised thousands of grassroots gifts. Her successors added large donors to the mix.

The donors themselves are fascinating people. Like passionate givers today, they were not satisfied to give money only, but also pushed organizations to adopt new strategies and tactics. Alva Belmont created an entire new organization, the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, to speed the cause. Katharine McCormick was deeply involved in day-to-day operations at suffrage groups. She was a stern keeper of purse strings who wouldn’t authorize expenditures for speakers or programs until revenue was in the door to support them. Yet when fundraising numbers didn’t hit targets, McCormick was known to fill gaps herself.

Many donors to the women’s vote supported suffrage anonymously. That choice hints at the importance of privacy in giving, especially when civil society is testing new, divergent, unpopular, or just unfamiliar creations.

So raise a glass this summer to the brave, energetic, and often invisible donors who never gave up on expanding our democracy.

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Started in 2007, it had a 100 percent college acceptance rate, and its graduates garnered over $78 million in scholarships toward their postsecondary education.

Last year 98 Catholic schools closed nationwide. Preliminary figures suggest a similar or larger number will be shuttered this year.

CIVICS REINFORCEMENT.

“Educating current and future generations of students about the historical, political, and philosophical foundations of democracy—and especially the American democracy—is absolutely essential,” said John Nau in May, announcing a $27.5 million donation to the University of Virginia to bolster knowledge of America’s founding, history, and political principles. The Nau Foundation grant, plus almost $17.5 million in matching funds, will endow ten faculty positions and fund special research and programming. Nau thanked the partners who helped lock in his intent: “As a donor, supporting higher education with a significant gift can often have its challenges. In this instance, Adam Kissel at The Philanthropy Roundtable, the development office at the University, and President Jim Ryan all worked together to develop a successful outcome.” The donor even redirected $2 million to a general fund to help the university make emergency adaptations due to covid-19.

OVER 200 VETERANS who had medical training when they were in the military staffed a field hospital that New York Presbyterian Hospital erected over a soccer field at Columbia University to cope with covid-19. Veterans have been tapped for virus response in other locations, as well. In Houston, Combined Arms identified vets capable of filling personnel gaps at Texas Medical Center. HireHeroes USA, a nonprofit focused on employment (and a partner of The Philanthropy Roundtable in our Independence Project to improve treatment of disabled vets), recently announced a partnership with the CDC Foundation to place veterans in health-care jobs.

THANKS TO PRIVATE DONATIONS channeled through the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship, a large fraction of low-income K-12 students in Florida are now able to attend private schools when their local public school is poor. Since 2001 over 784,000 students have participated in the program—and two thirds of them are Hispanic or black, while over half come from single-parent homes. That according to Victoria Bell of The Philanthropy Roundtable, who analyzes this effort in a recent report for the R Street Institute.

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SILVER LININGS. Smart philanthropists are trying to use the urgency of the covid-19 outbreak to make long-term improvements that will be valuable for many years beyond the current emergency. Here’s an example cited recently by Mark Suzman, CEO of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: “We’re trying to put in place systems and structures that will have benefits long after the covid crisis is history. For example, in developing countries, one of the critical needs is to have effective oxygen supply, because we know breathing and respiratory difficulties are one of the core covid symptoms. Oxygen supply is a perennial challenge in many developing countries anyway—it’s needed, often, when there’s complications around childbirth, and many other illnesses. If we can fix this now for covid, that will have very strong long-term benefits for the health systems and structures in those countries.”

Charitable Gifts Total
$450 billion in 2019
– rise 2.3 times the rate of inflation –

$21 billion from corporations
annual increase = 7.2x inflation

$76 billion from foundations
annual increase = 1.4x inflation

$353 billion from individuals
(including bequests)
annual increase = 2.2x inflation

Source: Giving USA 2020