



## **Statement**

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What can be learned from this year's *Giving USA* estimates covering American philanthropy in 2011?

One message that remains clear is that when it comes to charitable contributions, individual giving reigns. When you add together what is contributed to philanthropy through American households, bequests and family foundations, that piece of the total \$298.42 billion estimated giving “pie” for 2011 comes to 88 percent.

Therefore, as individual budgets are impacted by various influences, including the lingering effects from such economic stressors as the Great Recession, Americans react by changing how much they feel they can comfortably give to philanthropic causes – both up and down.

Individual giving rose an estimated 3.9 percent in 2011, and that is an encouraging sign of two things: that Americans are feeling better about their personal financial situations, as measured by several economic indices, thus allowing them to continue – and slightly increase – their giving; and, that they feel philanthropy remains a core value worthy of support.

While a cautious celebration might seem to be in order because 2011 saw the second year of growth in individual giving, heed must also be paid to the fact that, as this statement is written in June 2012, the American economy remains volatile on many fronts, and that could have an impact on giving going forward.

Giving USA Foundation and the organization that founded it, Giving Institute, have been about the work of documenting America's charitable gifts for 57 years so the picture we have been able to paint through exhaustive research over the decades reveals both truisms and surprises. One truism, as noted above, is the importance of individual giving. Surprises include the fast growth of giving to international affairs, thanks to both an explosion in the number of charities serving this arena and an increasing cognizance among Americans about needs beyond our borders.

*Giving USA* is our nation's longest-running fact book on the state of American philanthropy, and leaders at charities across the country should comb through the

report so that the facts within can be used to bolster their cases for support. In other words, consider us your partner in reaching your philanthropic goals.

In addition to facts, though, I also suggest it is important that charitable organizations continue to make clear the needs they are addressing, how donations are making a difference, and the successful outcomes that are being achieved because of these gifts.

Finally, on behalf of Giving USA Foundation, I extend thanks to Americans for their continued generosity to philanthropic causes, as well as to the charitable organizations that turn those gifts into services that have become key to the fabric of our lives.