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LETTER

Social Entrepreneurs: Here's What They Can Do

To the Editor:

"Thoroughly Modern Do-Gooders," by David Brooks (column, March 21), illustrates the power social entrepreneurs have to develop measurable solutions to social problems and the supportive role government can play. In several states this effort is already under way.

Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu of Louisiana created the first Office of Social Entrepreneurship in 2006 after witnessing how social entrepreneurs helped after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

In Virginia, the Phoenix Project partnered with the governor's office to encourage social entrepreneurial solutions to reduce poverty. In Texas, One Star Foundation is working with the governor to explore several opportunities like those Mr. Brooks suggested.

There is also research emerging on the topic, including a chapter on social entrepreneurship in the latest Small Business Administration annual report and coming Aspen Institute activities. These initiatives are only the beginning of what may be a new role for government as the public innovator.

By adapting some of the same policies and programs that encourage private-sector entrepreneurship, government leaders can stimulate innovative solutions that work.

Andrew Wolk

Cambridge, Mass., March 24, 2008

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