

# Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Michael Bennet  
261 Russell Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

The undersigned organizations strongly oppose proposals that would politicize the charitable nonprofit and philanthropic community by repealing or weakening current federal tax law protections that prohibit 501(c)(3) organizations from endorsing, opposing, or contributing to political candidates.

Nonpartisanship is a cornerstone principle that has strengthened the public's trust of the charitable community. In exchange for enjoying tax-exempt status and the ability to receive tax-deductible contributions, 501(c)(3) organizations – charitable nonprofits, including religious congregations, and foundations – agree to not engage in “any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.”

That provision of law protects the integrity and independence of charitable nonprofits and foundations. It shields the entire 501(c)(3) community against the rancor of partisan politics so the charitable community can be a safe haven where individuals of all beliefs come together to solve community problems free from partisan divisions. It screens out doubts and suspicions regarding ulterior partisan motives of charitable organizations, as undoubtedly would occur if even just a few charitable organizations engaged in partisan politics. Nonpartisan credibility is critical to the ability of 501(c)(3) organizations to work with elected officials of all parties at the local, state, and federal levels to address community needs.

Charitable nonprofits, including religious congregations, are free to speak on important matters of the day and advocate on public policy issues and legislation. Private foundations, while barred from most lobbying activities, are free to engage in public debates, promote public education efforts, and fund a wide range of issue-focused activities. The relevant language in Section 501(c)(3) merely prohibits partisan campaign intervention, defined to include endorsing or opposing candidates for public office, publishing or distributing statements for or against candidates, or using tax-deductible and other resources to support partisan campaign activities.

We are united in opposing any and all efforts to weaken or repeal this longstanding protection in the federal tax code (sometimes called the Johnson Amendment) that President Eisenhower signed into law in 1954. Weakening the law by allowing leaders of individual 501(c)(3) entities to endorse candidates for public office and engage in some partisan electioneering activities would damage the integrity and effectiveness of all charitable organizations and spawn litigation as innovative partisans seek to expand gray areas in the proposed legislation. Repealing the Johnson Amendment, an approach promoted by the President and some in Congress, would damage the federal Treasury as people take tax deductions for political contributions they could then funnel through charitable nonprofits, undercut fair elections by providing a loophole to avoid campaign contribution disclosure laws, and empower politicians to exert pressure for access to foundation assets and charitable funds for their own partisan campaigns rather than for the public good.

We urge you to join us in opposing efforts to weaken and/or repeal the current law that for six decades has successfully protected the integrity and effectiveness of charitable nonprofits and foundations by keeping them apart from partisan politics.

Respectfully,

<b>Colorado Organizations</b>			
Adam's Camp		Disability Law Colorado	Denver
AdvocacyDenver	Denver	Doctors Care	Littleton
Advocate Safehouse Project	Glenwood Springs	Downtown Aurora Visual Arts	Aurora
		Early Childhood Council of Larimer County	Fort Collins
AKC Canine Health Foundation		Emily Davis Consulting	
Almost Home, Inc.	Brighton	English In Action	Basalt
Ambassadors Fellowship		First Presbyterian Church	Pueblo
Anschutz Family Foundation	Denver	Friends of the Bell County Animal Shelter	Pineville
Ascend Performing Arts, Inc.	Colorado Springs	Friends of the Haven	Denver
		Greeley Center for Independence	Greeley
Aspen Community Foundation		Grey Havens Group, Inc.	Longmont
Association for Community Living in Boulder & Broomfield Counties	Lafayette	Guidestone Consulting	Boulder
Boulder Valley Women's Health Center	Boulder	Happy Lucky's Teahouse	Fort Collins
Center for Nonprofit Excellence	Colorado Springs	Imagination Library of Denver	Denver
		Improve International	
CleanSlateNow	Denver	Interaction Christian Outreach Mission	Aurora
Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education	Denver	International Hearing Dog, Inc.	
Colorado Association of Funders		JFFixler Group	Centennial
Colorado Center on Law and Policy	Denver	JR Haeck PC	Lakewood
Colorado Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State	Fountain	Kate Kalstein Consulting	Denver
Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition	Denver	Kids At Their Best	Fort Morgan
Colorado High School Cycling League	Boulder	Larimer Humane Society	Fort Collins
Colorado Music Festival and Center for Musical Arts	Lafayette	LifeSpark Cancer Resources	Lakewood
Colorado Nonprofit Association	Denver	Longmont Council for the Arts	Longmont
Community Foundation of the Gunnison Valley	Gunnison	M3 Consulting	Denver
Community Resource Center	Denver	McKee Medical Center Foundation	Loveland
Community Shares of Colorado	Denver	Mesa County Libraries Foundation	Grand Junction
Conflict Center	Denver	Mirror Image Arts	Edgewater
Crestone Performances, Inc.	Crestone	Outreach Uganda	Highlands Ranch
Crow Canyon Archaeological Center	Cortez		
Dante's Place	Littleton	Parkinson Association of the Rockies	Denver
Delta County Public Library District	Delta	Partners in Nonprofit Success	Denver
Denver Justice and Peace Committee	Denver	Posada	Pueblo
Denver Urban Matters	Denver	Project L.I.F.E.	Denver
		Project Managers Without Borders	
		Project Safeguard	Denver
		Restoration Project International	Denver
		Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library	Denver
		Roice-Hurst Humane Society	Grand Junction
		SafeHouse Denver, Inc.	Denver

Second Chance Center, Inc.	Aurora
Secure World Foundation	Broomfield
Sense of Security	Denver
Sexual Assault Victim Advocate Center	Fort Collins
Shadhika Project, Inc.	Denver
Sister Carmen Community Center	Lafayette
Society of Asian Scientists & Engineers	Edgewater
Soul Spring	Denver
St. Francis Center	Denver
Team Summit Colorado	Dillon
Telluride Flights Worldwide Children's Relief Fund	Telluride
The Arc - Arapahoe & Douglas	Centennial
The Arc - Jefferson, Clear Creek & Gilpin Counties	Lakewood
The Arc of Adams County	Northglenn
The Arc of Aurora	Aurora
The Arc of Pueblo	Pueblo
The Community Foundation Boulder County	Boulder
The Denver Foundation	Denver
The Empowerment Program	Denver
The GLBT Community Center of Colorado	Denver
The Lowry Foundation	Denver
The Prentice Foundation	Boulder
The Shaka Franklin Foundation for Youth	
The Vegetable Connection	Fort Collins
The Women's Foundation of Colorado	Denver
Third Sector Group	Colorado Springs
Touching the World	Colorado Springs
Verified Volunteers	Fort Collins
Voices Carry Child Advocacy Center	
Volunteers of America Colorado Branch	Denver
We Don't Waste	Denver
Wilderness Workshop	Carbondale
Wildlands Restoration Volunteers	Firestone
Woodmoor Financial Group	Colorado Springs
Young Voices of Colorado	Englewood

**National Organizations**

- Abila
- Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
- AdoptAClassroom.org
- Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
- Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
- American Alliance of Museums
- American Association of Anatomists
- American Association of Physics Teachers
- American Association of Teachers of German
- American Bladder Cancer Society
- American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine
- American Brass Chamber Music Association
- American Conference of Academic Deans
- American Heart Association
- American Historical Association
- American Jewish Committee
- American Medical Association Foundation
- American Physiological Society
- American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.
- American Red Cross
- Americans for the Arts
- Americans Promoting Study Abroad
- Americans United for Separation of Church and State
- Amyloidosis Foundation
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
- Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
- Association of American Colleges and Universities
- Association of Art Museum Directors
- Association of Direct Response Fundraising Counsel
- Association of Fundraising Professionals
- Association of Immunization Managers
- Association of Nature Center Administrators
- Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
- Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
- Baptist Women in Ministry
- Barr Foundation
- BoardSource
- Brady Campaign and Center to Prevent Gun Violence
- Camp Fire
- Campion Foundation
- Catholic Charities USA
- Catholic Mobilizing Network

Center for Health, Environment & Justice  
Center for Inquiry  
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation  
Citizen Schools  
CleanSlateNow  
Commonwealth Fund  
Council on Foundations  
Council for Global Equality  
Dance USA  
Dementia Society, Inc.  
Democracy 21  
Destination & Travel Foundation  
Dietel Partners, LLC  
Disability Rights Advocacy Fund  
Ecology Project International  
Engineering Conferences International  
Feed the Children  
Feeding America  
Food & Water Watch  
Ford Foundation  
Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers  
Free Press  
Girl Scouts of the USA  
Girls Inc.  
Global Integrity  
Goodwill Industries, International  
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations  
Greater Nonprofits  
GuideStar  
Habitat for Humanity International  
Harbor Compliance  
HawkWatch International  
Hindu American Foundation  
Histocytosis Foundation  
Horizons National  
Human Science Institute  
Independent Sector  
International Essential Tremor Foundation  
International Hearing Dog, Inc.  
International Performing Arts for Youth  
International Primate Protection League  
Issue One  
Jessie Ball DuPont Fund  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Jewish Federations of North America  
Leadership USA  
League of American Orchestras  
League of Women Voters  
Leukemia Research Foundation  
Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education  
Lumina Foundation  
Lymphoma Foundation of America  
Migraine Research Foundation  
Mentors International  
Morino Ventures, LLC  
National Association of Charitable Gift Planners  
National Association of Health Data Organizations  
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)  
National Association of Watch and Collectors  
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
National Center for Fire and Life Safety  
National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy  
National Council of Behavioral Health  
National Council of Churches  
National Council of Nonprofits  
National Dance Education Organization  
National Hartford Centers of Gerontological Nursing Excellence  
National Human Services Assembly  
National Indian Child Welfare Association  
National LGBTQ Task Force  
National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation  
National Runaway Safeline  
National Safe Place Network  
National Tongan American Society  
NEO Law Group  
North American Bramble Growers Research Foundation  
OPERA America  
Partnership for America's Children  
Pension Fund of the Christian Church  
Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement  
Project Wet Foundation  
Project Managers Without Borders  
Public Citizen  
Rockefeller Brothers Fund  
Secular Coalition for America  
Senior Executives Association  
Seva Foundation  
Skillman Foundation  
Silicon Valley Community Foundation  
Smith's Food and Drug  
Social Velocity  
The Arc of the United States  
The Aspen Institute  
The Commonwealth Fund

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Colorado

The Dibble Institute  
The Educational Foundation of America  
The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi  
The Michael J. Fox Foundation  
The Ocean Foundation  
The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation  
The Voter Participation Center  
TIDES  
Unemployment Services Trust  
Union for Reform Judaism  
United Way Worldwide  
University Professional & Continuing Education  
Association  
US Lacrosse  
Vasculitis Foundation  
Volunteers of America  
Voto Latino  
Wallace Global Fund  
WasteWater Education  
Weingart Foundation  
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation  
Words Without Borders  
World Day of Prayer USA  
World Neighbors, Inc.  
Youth Services America  
YWCA USA