Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED June 1, 2018

The Honorable Mike Coffman
2443 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Coffman:

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,

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

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Respectfully,

Colorado

Adam's Camp
AdvocacyDenver
Advocate Safehouse Project
AKC Canine Health Foundation
Almost Home, Inc.
Ambassadors Fellowship
Anglers of Honor
Anschutz Family Foundation
Apogaea
Apron Strings & Making Things
Asay Consulting, LLC
Ascend Performing Arts, Inc.
Aspen Community Foundation
Aspen Historical Society Association for Community Living in Boulder & Broomfield Counties
Athena Project
AutisticFusion
Bohemian Foundation
Boulder Valley Women's Health Center
Center for Health Progress
Center for Nonprofit Excellence
ChildSafe Colorado
Citizens Project
CleanSlateNow
Clinica Tepeyac
Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education
Colorado Association of Funders
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Colorado Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
Colorado High School Cycling League
Colorado Music Festival and Center for Musical Arts
Colorado Nonprofit Association
Colorado Nonprofit Development Center
Colorado Ovarian Cancer Alliance
Colorado Pet Pantry
Colorado Women's Education Foundation
Community First Foundation
Community Foundation of the Gunnison Valley
Community Resource Center
Community Shares of Colorado
Conflict Center
Crestone Performances, Inc.
Crow Canyon Archaeological Center
Dante's Place
DCR, Inc.
Delta County Public Library District
Denver Asset Building Coalition
Denver Justice and Peace Committee
Denver Urban Matters
Denver's Early Childhood Council
Disability Law Colorado
Doctors Care
Downtown Aurora Visual Arts
Early Childhood Council of Larimer County
Eating Disorder Foundation
Economic Literacy Colorado
Emily Davis Consulting
English In Action

Glenwood Springs
Denver
Aspen
Lafayette
Colorado Springs
Denver
Colorado Springs
Fort Collins
Denver
Denver
Denver
Denver
Denver
Denver
Denver
Lafayette
Colorado Springs
Denver

Boulder
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Boulder
Denver
Gunnison
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Denver
Denver
Boulder
Littleton
Delta
Denver
Denver
Denver
Littleton
Aurora
Fort Collins
Boulder
Denver
Basalt
<p>| Evergreen Christian Outreach (EChO) | Evergreen | Parkinson Association of the Rockies | Denver |
| First Presbyterian Church | Pueblo | Partners in Nonprofit Success | Denver |
| Food Bank of the Rockies | Denver | Philanthropy Field Trips Posada | Pueblo |
| Friends of the Bell County Animal Shelter | Pineville | Prentice Foundation Pretty Brainy | Loveland |
| Friends of the Colorado Talking Book Library | Denver | Project L.I.F.E. | Denver |
| Friends of the Haven | Denver | Project Managers Without Borders | Denver |
| GLBT Community Center of CO | Greeley | Project Safeguard | Denver |
| Greeley Center for Independence | Greeley | Project Self-Sufficiency of Loveland - Fort Collins | Loveland |
| Grey Havens Group, Inc. | Longmont | Restoration Project International | Denver |
| Guidestone Consulting | Boulder | Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library | Denver |
| Habitat for Humanity of Metro Denver | Boulder | Rose Community Foundation | Grand Junction |
| Hands For Life Uptown | | Safe Passage | Denver |
| Happy Lucky's Teahouse | Fort Collins | Rocky Mountain Raptor Program | Fort Collins |
| Imagination Library of Denver | Denver | Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library | Denver |
| Immigrant Legal Center of Boulder County | Boulder | Second Chance Center, Inc. | Denver |
| Improve International | | Social Security Administration | Denver |
| In the Know | Aurora | SafeHouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence | Boulder |
| Interaction Christian Outreach Mission | Aurora | SafeHouse Denver, Inc. | Denver |
| International Hearing Dog, Inc. | | Sandhia Project, Inc. | Denver |
| JBL Creative | Westminster | Seniors' Resource Center | Denver |
| JFFixler Group | Centennial | Sense of Security | Denver |
| JR Hauck PC | Lakewood | Sexual Assault Victim Advocate Center | Fort Collins |
| Junior League of Denver | Denver | Shadhika Project, Inc. | Denver |
| Kate Kalstein Consulting | Denver | Sister Carmen Community Center | Lafayette |
| Kids At Their Best | Fort Morgan | | |
| Larimer Humane Society | Fort Collins | | |
| LifeSpark Cancer Resources | Lakewood | American Cancer Society | Edgewater |
| Lincoln Hills Cares | Denver | | |
| Longmont Council for the Arts | Longmont | | |
| M3 Consulting | Denver | | |
| McKee Medical Center Foundation | Loveland | St. Francis Center | Denver |
| Mesa County Libraries Foundation | Grand Junction | Team Summit Colorado | Dillon |
| Metro Denver Partners | Denver | Telluride Flights Worldwide | Telluride |
| Mirror Image Arts | Edgewater | Children's Relief Fund The Arc - Arapahoe &amp; Douglas | Centennial |
| Mission Minded, Inc. | Denver | The Arc - Jefferson, Clear Creek &amp; Gilpin Counties The Arc of Adams County | Lakewood |
| NEWSED Community Development Corporation | | The Arc of Aurora | Northglenn |
| Outreach Uganda | Highlands Ranch | The Arc of Larimer County | Fort Collins |</p>
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Episcopal Relief & Development
Feed the Children
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Fidesco USA
Food & Water Watch
Ford Foundation
Free Press
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
Global Integrity
Goodwill Industries International, Inc.
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
Greater Nonprofits
GuideStar
Habitat for Humanity International
Harbor Compliance
HawkWatch International
Hindu American Foundation
Histiocytosis Foundation
Horizons National
Human Science Institute
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International Essential Tremor Foundation
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International Primate Protection League
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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
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The Educational Foundation of America
The George Gund Foundation
The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi
The Michael J. Fox Foundation
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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
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