Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship
UPDATED June 1, 2018

The Honorable L. Francis Rooney III
120 Cannon House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Rooney:

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,

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Florida

Allegany Franciscan Ministries Palm Harbor
ALSO Youth, Inc. Sarasota
Alzheimer's & Dementia Orlando Palm Coast
Resource Center
Americans United for Naples
Separation of Church and Orlando
State - Atlantic Coast
Chapter
Americans United for
Separation of Church and Naples
State - Naples
Association of Fundraising
Professionals Central Florida
Chapter
Avant Garde Accounting and
Business Solutions, LLC New Port
Beacon of Hope Pine Island, Richey
Inc.
Bright Community Trust, Inc. St. James City
Bristol Strategy Group
Care First Disability Services Clearwater
Palm Harbor
LLC Pembroke
Cathedral Arts Project, Inc. Vero Beach
CenterLink: The Community of
Boyton Beach Fort
LGBT Centers Lauderdale
Children's Home Society of
Clearwater Orlando
Florida

Fish First Disability Services
Clearwater Free Clinic
Community Cancer Education, Inc.
Community Foundation of
Broward
Community Foundation of
Collier County
Cornerstone Housing, Inc.
Domestic Violence Shelter
Epilepsy Association of Central
Florida, Inc.
Fanny Landwirth Foundation
Firehouse Cultural Center, Inc.
First Bristol FCU
Florida Alliance of Community
Development Corporations, Inc.
Florida Association of
Nonprofits
Florida Lions Conklin Centers
for the Blind
Florida Nonprofit Alliance
Florida Philanthropic Network
Foundation for a Healthy St.
Petersburg
Freedom Payee Services, Inc.
Friends of the Carr Refuge
Girl Scouts of Southeast
Florida
GiveWell Community
Foundation, Inc.
Gobioff Foundation
Habitat for Humanity
Haitelmex Foundation, Inc.
High Seas Academy
Hispanic Services Council, Inc.
Ilse Newell Fund for the
Performing Arts, Inc. -
INConcert
Independence for the Blind of
West Florida
Initiative Community
International
Jessie Ball duPont Fund
Jobsite Theater
Josh Provides Epilepsy
Assistance Foundation, Inc.
KBT & Associates
La Cacica Cimarrona
Education & Publishing, Inc.
Lemon Bay Playhouse, Inc.
Lighthouse Central Florida
Lighthouse SWFL, Inc.
Lydia B. Stokes Foundation
Mandarin Museum &
Historical Society
Jacksonville
Fort Lauderdale
Daytona Beach
Jacksonville
St. Petersburg
Indian Harbour Beach
Jupiter
Lakeland
Tampa
Fort Lauderdale
Jacksonville
Tampa
Apalachicola
Pensacola
Jacksonville
Tampa
Sarasota
Jacksonville
Loiza
Englewood
Orlando
North Fort Myers
Gainesville
Jacksonville
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Mary Lee Walker, LLC Orlando Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
Minority Help, Inc. Pompano Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
MSL Grant Consulting Boca Raton America Solidaria U.S.
Nonprofit Center of Northeast American Alliance of Museums
Florida
Not A Dry Eye Foundation Jacksonville American Association of Anatomists
P.L. Dodge Foundation, Inc. Miami American Association of Physics Teachers
Palm Beach Habilitation Lake Worth American Association of Teachers of German
Center
Pathfinder Outdoor Education
Phil-Com, LLC Bradenton American Atheists
Pioneer Florida Museum Dade City American Brass Chamber Music Association
Quality Life Center of Fort Myers American Conference of Academic Deans
Southwest Florida, Inc.
Rebuilding Together Miami- American Heart Association
Dade
RemediOcean, Inc. Clearwater American Historical Association
Risser Oil Corporation St. Petersburg American Jewish Committee
S J Edwards Foundation
Second Harvest Food Bank of Miami American Medical Association Foundation
Central Florida
South Palm Beach County Americans for the Arts
Foundation
The Center for Abuse and Americans Promoting Study Abroad
Rape Emergencies (C.A.R.E.) Americans United for Separation of Church
and State
The Community Foundation Punta Gorda Amyloidosis Foundation
Jacksonville
for Northeast Florida Annie E. Casey Foundation
The Glades Initiative, Inc. Belle Glade Anti-Defamation League
The Mustard Seed of Central Orlando Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
Florida
The Pride Center at Equality Wilton Manors Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
Park
Unity Miami Association of American Colleges and
Volunteer Assistance to the Hollywood Universities
Vulnerable
Volunteers of America of Saint
Florida
War on Poverty - Florida
Jacksonville
Waste Not Want Not, Inc. Winter Park Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Winter Park Health Barr Foundation
Foundation
Your Nonprofit Advisor, Inc. Winter Park Baptist Women in Ministry
YWCA of Greater Miami-Dade, Inc. BoardSource
Miami

National Organizations

Abila
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic
Education, Inc.
AdoptAClassroom.org
African Diaspora United, Inc.
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation  
Citizen Schools  
CleanSlateNow  
Common Cause  
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  
Easter Seals  
Ecology Project International  
Engineering Conferences International  
Episcopal Relief & Development  
Feed the Children  
Feeding America  
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  
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 Alliance for Law and Social Action  
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  
Millennium Water Alliance  
Mentors International  
Morino Ventures, LLC  
National 4-H Council  
National Alliance of Community Economic Development  
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  
National Association for Shoplifting Prevention  
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
National Center for Fire and Life Safety  
National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome  
National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy  
National Council of Behavioral Health  
National Council of Churches  
National Council of Nonprofits  
National Council of Tribes  
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 Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc.
The Commonwealth Fund
The Dibble Institute
The Educational Foundation of America
The George Gund Foundation
The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi
The Michael J. Fox Foundation
The Ocean Foundation
The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
The Voter Participation Center
TIDES
Unemployment Services Trust
Union for Reform Judaism
United Philanthropy Forum
United Soldiers and Sailors of America
United Way Worldwide
University Professional & Continuing Education Association
US Lacrosse
Vasculitis Foundation
Volunteers in Medicine
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