

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Jim Risch
483 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Risch:

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,

Idaho Organizations

Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley	Hailey	Library	
AquAbility	Boise	Northwest Sacred Music Chorale	Coeur d'Alene
Behavioral Health Center at EIRMC	Idaho Falls	Pacific Northwest Clean Water Association	
Big Brothers Big Sisters of SE Idaho	Idaho Falls	Prichard Art Gallery, University of Idaho	Moscow
Big Brothers Big Sisters of SW Idaho	Boise	Sandpoint Community Resource Center	Sandpoint
Blaine County Hunger Coalition	Bellevue	Selkirk Outdoor Leadership & Education (SOLE), Inc.	Sandpoint
Bluum	Boise	Snake River Community Clinic	Lewiston
Bustin Out Of Boise	Boise	South Central Community Action Partnership	Twin Falls
Caritas Chorale	Hailey	SPUR	
CATCH, Inc.	Boise	Spur Community Foundation	Ketchum
Children's Village		Syringa Hospital Foundation	White Bird
Community Action Partnership Association of Idaho		Tesh, Inc.	Coeur d'Alene
Council Cultural Arts Committee, Inc.	Council	The Center for HOPE	Idaho Falls
Create Common Good	Boise	The First Tee of Idaho	Eagle
Development Workshop Inc.	Idaho Falls	The Salvation Army of Boise Idaho	Boise
Earth Water Alliance, Inc.	Eagle	Treasure Valley Artists' Alliance	Boise
Eastern Idaho Community Action Partnership, Inc.	Idaho Falls	United Way of North Idaho	Coeur d'Alene
Eastern Idaho Technical College Foundation	Idaho Falls	United Way of Southeastern Idaho	Pocatello
El Ada Community Action Partnership	Boise	Washington, Idaho & Montana Ry. History Preservation Group, Inc.	Potlatch
Flourish Collective, Inc.		Watershed Guardians, Inc.	Pocatello
Flourish Foundation	Boise	Wellness Tree Community Clinic	Twin Falls
Framing Our Community, Inc.	Elk City	Wood River Women's Foundation	Hailey
HAPI Trails, Horse Rescue	Victor		
HD Insurance	Boise	National Organizations	
Hillview Preschool	Boise	Abila	
Hospice of North Idaho	Hayden	Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.	
Idaho Chukar Foundation Inc.	Meridian	AdoptAClassroom.org	
Idaho Falls Symphony	Idaho Falls	Alliance for Strong Families and Communities	
Idaho Firewise Inc.	Moscow	Alfred P. Sloan Foundation	
Idaho Nonprofit Center	Boise	American Alliance of Museums	
Idaho Oral Health Alliance		American Association of Anatomists	
Idaho Rivers United		American Association of Physics Teachers	
Idaho Smart Growth	Boise	American Association of Teachers of German	
Inland Northwest Food Network		American Bladder Cancer Society	
Jannus, Inc.		American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine	
McCall Arts and Humanities Council	McCall	American Brass Chamber Music Association	
McCall Winter Sports Club	McCall		
North Bingham County District	Shelley		

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
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 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

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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
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