

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED June 1, 2018

The Honorable Mike Simpson
2084 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Simpson:

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.

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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			
Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley	Hailey	Idaho Oral Health Alliance	
AquAbility	Boise	Idaho Rivers United	
Behavioral Health Center at EIRMC	Idaho Falls	Idaho Smart Growth	Boise
Big Brothers Big Sisters of SE Idaho	Idaho Falls	Inland Northwest Food Network	
Big Brothers Big Sisters of SW Idaho	Boise	Jannus, Inc.	
Blaine County Hunger Coalition	Bellevue	Longfellow Chess Club	Boise
Bluum	Boise	McCall Arts and Humanities Council	McCall
Boise Bully Breed Rescue	Boise	McCall Winter Sports Club	McCall
Bustin Out Of Boise	Boise	Music Conservatory of Sandpoint	Sandpoint
Caritas Chorale	Hailey	Nampa United Church of Christ	Nampa
CATCH, Inc.	Boise	North Bingham County District Library	Shelley
Children's Village		Northwest Sacred Music Chorale	Coeur d'Alene
Community Action Partnership Association of Idaho		Pacific Northwest Clean Water Association	
Council Cultural Arts Committee, Inc.	Council	Prichard Art Gallery, University of Idaho	Moscow
Create Common Good	Boise	Sandpoint Community Resource Center	Sandpoint
Development Workshop, Inc.	Idaho Falls	Santa's Cause, Inc.	Twin Falls
Earth Water Alliance, Inc.	Eagle	Selkirk Outdoor Leadership & Education (SOLE), Inc.	Sandpoint
Eastern Idaho Community Action Partnership, Inc.	Idaho Falls	Snake River Community Clinic	Lewiston
Eastern Idaho Technical College Foundation	Idaho Falls	South Central Community Action Partnership	Twin Falls
El Ada Community Action Partnership	Boise	SPUR	
Flourish Collective, Inc.		Spur Community Foundation	Ketchum
Flourish Foundation	Boise	Syringa Hospital Foundation	White Bird
Framing Our Community, Inc.	Elk City	Tesh, Inc.	Coeur d'Alene
Friends of Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge	Bonnors Ferry	The Advocates	Hailey
HAPI Trails, Horse Rescue	Victor	The American Dream Foundation	Idaho Falls
HD Insurance	Boise	The Center for HOPE	Idaho Falls
Hillview Preschool	Boise	The First Tee of Idaho	Eagle
Hospice of North Idaho	Hayden	The Idaho Foodbank	Boise
Idaho Botanical Garden	Boise	The Pearl Theater	Bonnors Ferry
Idaho Chukar Foundation, Inc.	Meridian	The Salvation Army of Boise Idaho	Boise
Idaho Conservation League	Boise	Treasure Valley Artists' Alliance	Boise
Idaho Falls Symphony	Idaho Falls	United Way of North Idaho	Coeur d'Alene
Idaho Firewise, Inc.	Moscow		
Idaho Nonprofit Center	Boise		

United Way of Southeastern Idaho	Pocatello
Washington, Idaho & Montana Ry. History Preservation Group, Inc.	Potlatch
Watershed Guardians, Inc.	Pocatello
Wellness Tree Community Clinic	Twin Falls
Women's Studio Workshop	Kingston
Wood River Women's Foundation	Hailey

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
Celiac Disease Foundation
Center for Health, Environment & Justice
Center for Inquiry
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

National Organizations

Abila
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
AdoptAClassroom.org
African Diaspora United, Inc.
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
America Solidaria U.S.
American Alliance of Museums
American Association of Anatomists
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Association of Teachers of German
American Atheists
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
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Anti-Defamation League
Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
Association of American Colleges and Universities
Association of Art Museum Directors

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

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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

YWCA USA