

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable John Shimkus
2217 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Shimkus:

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,

Illinois Organizations			
		Executive Service Corps of Chicago	Chicago
		Facing Forward to End Homelessness	Chicago
Aging Care Connections	La Grange	Family Bridges	Oakbrook Terrace
AIDS Foundation of Chicago	Chicago	Family Focus	Chicago
Allow Good	Chicago	Family Service and Mental Health Center of Cicero	Cicero
Alternatives, Inc.	Chicago	Forefront	Chicago
American Medical Association Foundation	Chicago	Friends of Downtown	Chicago
Arthur J. Schmitt Foundation	Northbrook	Friends of the Chicago River	
Association of Fundraising Professionals - Chicago IL Chapter	Chicago	Gene Siskel Film Center	Chicago
Baker McGee Consulting	Chicago	George M. Pullman Educational Foundation	
Ballet 5:8	Chicago	GrantResources, LLC	
Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago	Chicago	Growing Home, Inc.	Chicago
Bridge Communities	Glen Ellyn	Habitat for Humanity of Champaign County	Mahomet
Bright Promise Fund for Urban Christian Education	Chicago	Habitat for Humanity of Northern Fox Valley	
Career Resource Center	Lake Forest	Harris Theater for Music and Dance	Chicago
Center for Independent Futures	Evanston	High Concept Labs	Chicago
Chicago Community Loan Fund	Chicago	Holy Family Ministries	Lincolnshire
Chicago Cultural Alliance	Chicago	Housing Institute	Bolingbrook
Chicago Global Health Alliance	Chicago	Housing Opportunities & Maintenance for the Elderly (H.O.M.E.)	Chicago
Chicago Humanities Festival	Chicago	Illinois Association of Museums	Springfield
Child Care Center of Evanston	Evanston	Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence	Springfield
Children's Home Society of America	Chicago	Illinois Tech Global Leaders Program	Chicago
Children's Neuroblastoma Cancer Foundation	Bloomingtondale	IL-WI Sertoma Regional Center for Communicative Disorders	Palos Hills
Children's Place Association	Chicago	Iris Krieg & Associates, Inc.	Chicago
Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust	Elgin	JHR Resources	Chicago
College Bound Opportunities	Riverwoods	JOURNEYS The Road Home	Palatine
Community Behavioral Healthcare Association of Illinois	Springfield	KCCDD	Galesburg
CommunityHealth	Chicago	Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago	Glenview
Connections for the Homeless	Evanston	Land Conservancy of Will County	Frankfort
Creative Partners	Chicago	Latino Policy Forum	Chicago
Cristo Rey St. Martin College Prep	Waukegan	Leukemia Research Foundation	
Deborah's Place	Chicago	Levine Partners	Evanston
Duke of Edinburgh's International Award USA		Life Quilt Foundation	Chicago
DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform	Lombard	Lumity	Chicago
Ecker Center for Mental Health			
Embarc	Chicago		
Erie Family Health Center	Chicago		
Evanston Community Foundation	Evanston		

McAlpine Consulting for Growth, LLC Chicago
 Mercy Home for Boys & Girls Chicago
 Mission of Our Lady of Mercy, Inc. Chicago
 Mutual Ground, Inc. Aurora
 Naper Settlement Naperville
 National Louis University Chicago
 National Runaway Safeline Chicago
 NextLevelNPO, LLC Chicago
 Nineteenth Century Charitable Association
 Nonprofit-Partners Forest Park
 Northern Illinois Center for Nonprofit Excellence Rockford
 Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry Oak Park
 Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation Oak Park
 Palatine Township Senior Citizens Council Palatine
 PATH, Inc. Bloomington
 Pierce Family Foundation
 Pillars LaGrange Park
 Polk Bros. Foundation Chicago
 Prevention Partnership, Inc. Chicago
 QC Arts Rock Island
 Quarles & Brady LLP
 RAD Remedy Chicago
 S. Wolf and Associates Chicago
 Schield Family Foundation Wilmette
 Shelter Care Ministries Rockford
 Sherrie Marchi Coaching Palatine
 St. Helena's Church Burr Ridge
 Swan Isle Press Chicago
 The Chicago Music Consortium Bolingbrook
 The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust Chicago
 The Friendship Center Chicago
 The Harbour Park Ridge
 The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation Chicago
 The Seabury Foundation Chicago
 US Green Building Council Hoffman Estates
 Us TOO International Des Plaines
 Waukegan to College Waukegan
 Wheat Ridge Ministries Oak Park
 Wishnick & Associates Chicago
 Writers Theatre Glencoe
 Youth and Opportunity United Evanston
 Youth Outreach Services, Inc. Chicago
 YWCA - Canton Canton
 YWCA - Kankakee Kankakee
 YWCA - Elgin Elgin
 YWCA of the University of Illinois Champaign

ZION Development Corporation Rockford

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
 Champion 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
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

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Illinois

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