Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
2429 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Hunter:

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,

[List of organizations]
Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

Family Care Network, Inc.  San Luis Obispo
Family Resource Center of Truckee  Truckee
Family Service Association Hemet
First Graduate  San Francisco
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano  Concord
Friedman Consulting Santa Barbara
Galileo Coaching Lafayette
Garfield Foundation Douala, Cameroon
Get Smart Africa Costa Mesa
Girls Inc. of Orange County
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees Merced
Greater Nonprofits Trinidad
Guiamar Hiegert, CFRE & Associates
Habitat for Humanity East Bay/ Silicon Valley
Habitat for Humanity for San Luis Obispo County San Luis Obispo
Habitat For Humanity Greater San Francisco, Inc. San Francisco
Habitat for Humanity of Orange County Santa Ana
Health Connected Redwood City
Heart to Heart Oakland
Heather Mack Consulting LLC
Hoff Consulting Long Beach
Human Rights Data Analysis Group San Francisco
If/When/How Oakland
Impact Young Adults Grass Valley
InConcert Sierra
Inland Valley Council of Churches d/b/a Inland Valley Hope Partners
InspiraLaw
Institute for Religious Tolerance, Peace and Justice Los Angeles
International Community Foundation National City
Inverness Associates Berkeley
Janis Brewer Consulting Oakland
Jason Weiner Consulting Sacramento
Jewish Family & Children's Service of Long Beach & West Orange County Long Beach
Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles Los Angeles
Jewish Family Service of San Diego San Diego
Junior League of San Diego San Diego
Koreatown Youth and Community Center
Krafty Marketing Solutions
LakeShore Avenue Baptist Church
League of California Community Foundations
LIFE ElderCare Fremont
Life Skills Training and Educational Programs, Inc.
LifeSteps Fair Oaks
LifeRing Recovery Berkeley
Lighthouse Philanthropy Advisors San Jose
Little Brothers-Friends of the Elderly Lincoln
Live Oak Adult Day Services San Francisco
Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra
Los Angeles LGBT Center Los Angeles
Loveland Farm Sanctuary Long Beach
LSH Foundation Long Beach
Lupus LA Los Angeles
March Field Air Museum Riverside
Marcus Partners, LLC
Maternal and Child Health Access Los Angeles
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Meals on Wheels of the Monterey Peninsula, Inc. Pacific Grove
Mission Edge San Diego
Mission Minded San Rafael
Mona Bismarck American Center Los Angeles
Morgan Family Foundation
Mosaic Consulting and Coaching
Mountaintop Montessori San Jose
Napa Valley Community Housing
Nashashibi International Consultants, LLC Laguna Hills
| Neighborhood Funders Group                  | Oakland         | San Diego Advocates for Social Justice | San Diego |
| NEO Law Group                               | San Francisco   | San Diego Public Library Foundation   |          |
| NGO Catalyst                                | Los Angeles     | San Diego Youth Symphony & Conservatory | San Diego |
| Niswa Association, Inc.                    | Sunnyvale       | San Luis Obispo Symphony              |          |
| NKR Consulting                             | Los Angeles     | Santa Monica Conservancy               |          |
| Nonprofit Alliance of Monterey County      | Sunnyvale       | Santa Ynez Valley Arts Assoc.         |          |
| Not Man Apart Physical Theatre             | Los Angeles     | SBCC Foundation                        | Santa Barbara |
| Notre Dame de Namur University              | Belmont         | Seva Foundation                        | Berkeley |
| Oakland Museum of California                | San Francisco   | SF LGBT Center                         | San Francisco |
| OneJustice                                 | San Francisco   | Sierra Repertory Theatre               |          |
| Orange County United Way                   | Irvine          | Silicon Valley Bicycle Exchange        | Sonora   |
| Pacific Community Ventures                 | San Francisco   | Silicon Valley Community Foundation    | Mountain View |
| Pacific Links Foundation                   | Watsonville     | Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits  | San Jose  |
| Pajaro Valley Community Health Trust       |                |                                        |          |
| Pasadena Conservatory of Music              | Pasadena        | So CA Center for Nonprofit Management  | Los Angeles |
| Paso Pacifico                              | Ventura         | Solar Richmond                         | Richmond |
| Patricia D. and William B. Smullin Foundation| Eureka         | Somos Mayfair                          | San Jose  |
| Patriots and Paws                          | Huntington Beach| South Asian Network                    | Artesia   |
| Peninsula Family Service                   | San Mateo       | Southern California Center for Nonprofit Management | Los Angeles |
| Philanthropy California (a joint initiative of Northern California Grantmakers, San Diego Grantmakers, and Southern California Grantmakers) | Los Angeles      | Speech and Language Development Center | Buena Park |
| Point Foundation                           | Los Angeles     | St. Ignatius College Preparatory       |          |
| Pro Kids, The First Tee of San Diego       | San Diego       | Stapleton School of the Performing Arts | San Anselmo |
| Rancho Santa Fe Foundation                 |                | Strawberry Seals, Inc.                 | San Francisco |
| Recovery Cafe San Jose                     | San Jose        | Surrogate Gallery Projects SWEA        |          |
| reDiscover Center                          | Venice          | Swift Foundation                       | Los Osos  |
| Regenerate California Innovation           | Clovis          | Teen Success, Inc.                     | Milpitas  |
| Respite and Research for Alzheimer's Disease | San Jose     | The 5 Gyres Institute                  | Los Angeles |
| Richmond Community Foundation              | Richmond        | The American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine | San Francisco |
| Rochester Institute of Technology          | Los Altos       | The Christensen Fund                   | San Francisco |
| Sacramento LGBT Community Center           | Sacramento      | The David and Lucile Packard Foundation |          |
| Sadlon & Associates, Inc.                  | Glendale        | The Dibble Institute                   |          |
|                                           |                | The Elizabeth F. Gamble Garden         | Palo Alto |
|                                           |                | The Fieldstone Foundation              |          |
|                                           |                | The Lawrence Welk Family Foundation    | Los Angeles |
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California

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The Nicholson Family Foundation - Aptos
The River Project - Oakland
Theresa Nelson & Associates - Oakland
Tides - San Francisco
TR Brown Consulting - Oakland
TransForm - San Francisco
Tri Valley Haven - Livermore
Tuleyome - Woodland
Unemployment Services Trust
Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert - Rancho Mirage
United Way of Kern County - Bakersfield
United Ways of California
Unleashing Generosity / Triskeles Foundation - Tiburon
Vegan Outreach - Davis
Vesper Society - San Francisco
Vista Center for the Blind & Visually Impaired - Palo Alto
Wave Foundation - Santa Barbara
Waves of Gratefulness - Costa Mesa
Weingart Foundation - Costa Mesa
Western Methodist Justice Movement - Los Angeles
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management
WomenShelter of Long Beach - Long Beach
Youssef and Kamel Mawardi Fund - Riverside
YWCA of North Orange County - Fullerton

National Organizations

Abila
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
AdoptAClassroom.org
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
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
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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
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 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