

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Mike Coffman
2443 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Coffman:

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,

Colorado			
Adam's Camp		Colorado Women's Education Foundation	Boulder
AdvocacyDenver	Denver	Community First Foundation	Arvada
	Glenwood Springs	Community Foundation of the Gunnison Valley	Gunnison
Advocate Safehouse Project		Community Resource Center	Denver
AKC Canine Health Foundation		Community Shares of Colorado	Denver
Almost Home, Inc.	Brighton	Conflict Center	Denver
Ambassadors Fellowship		Crestone Performances, Inc.	Crestone
Anschutz Family Foundation	Denver	Crow Canyon Archaeological Center	Cortez
Apogaea	Denver	Dante's Place	Littleton
	Colorado Springs	DCR, Inc.	Centennial
Ascend Performing Arts, Inc.		Delta County Public Library District	Delta
Aspen Community Foundation		Denver Asset Building Coalition	Denver
Aspen Historical Society	Aspen	Denver Justice and Peace Committee	Denver
Association for Community Living in Boulder & Broomfield Counties	Lafayette	Denver Urban Matters	Denver
Athena Project		Denver's Early Childhood Council	Denver
AutisticFusion	Denver	Disability Law Colorado	Denver
Boulder Valley Women's Health Center	Boulder	Doctors Care	Littleton
Center for Health Progress	Denver	Downtown Aurora Visual Arts	Aurora
	Colorado Springs	Early Childhood Council of Larimer County	Fort Collins
Center for Nonprofit Excellence		Eating Disorder Foundation	Denver
ChildSafe Colorado	Fort Collins	Emily Davis Consulting	
	Colorado Springs	English In Action	Basalt
Citizens Project		First Presbyterian Church	Pueblo
CleanSlateNow	Denver	Food Bank of the Rockies	Denver
Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education		Friends of the Bell County Animal Shelter	Pineville
Colorado Association of Funders		Friends of the Colorado Talking Book Library	
Colorado Center on Law and Policy	Denver	Friends of the Haven	Denver
Colorado Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State	Fountain	GLBT Community Center of CO	Denver
Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition	Denver	Greeley Center for Independence	Greeley
Colorado High School Cycling League	Boulder	Grey Havens Group, Inc.	Longmont
Colorado Music Festival and Center for Musical Arts	Lafayette	Guidestone Consulting	Boulder
Colorado Nonprofit Association	Denver	Habitat for Humanity of Metro Denver	
Colorado Nonprofit Development Center		Hands For Life Uptown	
	Denver	Happy Lucky's Teahouse	Fort Collins
Colorado Ovarian Cancer Alliance	Denver	Imagination Library of Denver	Denver
Colorado Pet Pantry	Boulder	Immigrant Legal Center of Boulder County	Boulder
		Improve International	

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Colorado

In the Know	Aurora	St. Francis Center	Denver
Interaction Christian Outreach Mission	Aurora	Team Summit Colorado	Dillon
International Hearing Dog, Inc.	Westminster	Telluride Flights Worldwide	Telluride
JBL Creative	Centennial	Children's Relief Fund	Centennial
JFFixler Group	Lakewood	The Arc - Arapahoe & Douglas	
JR Haeck PC	Denver	The Arc - Jefferson, Clear Creek & Gilpin Counties	Lakewood
Junior League of Denver	Denver	The Arc of Adams County	Northglenn
Kate Kalstein Consulting	Denver	The Arc of Aurora	Aurora
Kids At Their Best	Fort Morgan	The Arc of Larimer County	Fort Collins
Larimer Humane Society	Fort Collins	The Arc of Pueblo	Pueblo
LifeSpark Cancer Resources	Lakewood	The Association of Fundraising Professionals Colorado Chapter	Denver
Longmont Council for the Arts	Longmont	The Community Foundation Boulder County	Boulder
M3 Consulting	Denver	The Denver Foundation	Denver
McKee Medical Center Foundation	Loveland	The Empowerment Program	Denver
	Grand Junction	The Gathering Place	Denver
Mesa County Libraries Foundation	Denver	The Leighty Foundation	
Metro Denver Partners	Edgewater	The Lillis Foundation	
Mirror Image Arts	Denver	The Lowry Foundation	Denver
Mission Minded, Inc.		The Shaka Franklin Foundation for Youth	
NEWSSED Community Development Corporation	Highlands Ranch	The Vegetable Connection	Fort Collins
Outreach Uganda	Denver	The Women's Foundation of Colorado	Denver
Parkinson Association of the Rockies	Denver	Third Sector Group	Colorado Springs
Partners in Nonprofit Success	Denver	Touching the World	Colorado Springs
Philanthropy Field Trips	Pueblo	Verified Volunteers	Fort Collins
Posada	Boulder	Voices Carry Child Advocacy Center	
Prentice Foundation	Loveland	Volunteers of America Colorado Branch	Denver
Pretty Brainy	Denver	We Don't Waste	Denver
Project L.I.F.E.	Denver	WildEarth Guardians	Denver
Project Managers Without Borders	Denver	Wilderness Workshop	Carbondale
Project Safeguard	Denver	Wildlands Restoration Volunteers	Firestone
Restoration Project International	Denver	Woodmoor Financial Group	Colorado Springs
Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library	Denver	Young Voices of Colorado	Englewood
Rocky Mountain Raptor Program	Fort Collins		
	Grand Junction		
Roice-Hurst Humane Society	Junction		
Safe Passage			
SafeHouse Denver, Inc.	Denver		
Second Chance Center, Inc.	Aurora		
Secure World Foundation	Broomfield		
Seniors' Resource Center	Denver		
Sense of Security	Denver		
Sexual Assault Victim Advocate Center	Fort Collins		
Shadhika Project, Inc.	Denver		
Sister Carmen Community Center	Lafayette		
Society of Asian Scientists & Engineers	Edgewater		
Soul Spring	Denver		

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
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