

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Brian Schatz
722 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schatz:

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,

Hawai`i			
ʻAi Pohaku- The Stone Eaters	Wai`anae	Harold K.L. Castle Foundation	Kailua
Aloha Medical Mission		Hawai`i Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations	Honolulu
Aloha Performing Arts Company	Kealakekua	Hawai`i Council for the Humanities	Honolulu
Aloha United Way	Honolulu	Hawai`i Meals on Wheels	Honolulu
Arcadia Community Services	Honolulu	Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice	Honolulu
Big Island Mediation, Inc. d/b/a West Hawaii Mediation Center	Kamuela	Hawaii Arts Alliance	Honolulu
Blue Planet Foundation	Honolulu	Hawaii Community Foundation	Honolulu
Breastfeeding Hawaii	Kaneohe	Hawaii Craftsmen	Honolulu
Business Plans Hawaii	Honolulu	Hawaii Forest Industry Association	Ookala
Ceeds of Peace	Honolulu	Hawaii Immunization Coalition	Honolulu
Central Union Church of Honolulu	Honolulu	Hawaii Nature Hui	Honolulu
Child & Family Service	Ewa Beach	Hawaii Opera Theatre	Honolulu
CHOW Project	Honolulu	Hawaii Parkinson Association	Kailua
Community Alliance on Prisons	Honolulu	Hawaii Plantation Museum	Papaikou
Community Based Case Management		Hawaii Public Charter School Network	
CommUnity Works, LLC	Kailua	Hawaii Public Health Association	Honolulu
Conservation Council for Hawai`i	Honolulu	Hawaii Youth Services Network	Honolulu
Design Thinking Hawaii	Honolulu	Hawaiian Humane Society	Honolulu
Drug Policy Forum of Hawai`i	Honolulu	Hawaii's Thousand Friends	
Ebb & Flow Arts, Inc.		Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies	Honolulu
Family Hui Hawaii	Honolulu	Helping Hands Hawaii	Honolulu
Feed Hawaii	Hawi	Heritage Hall, Inc.	Paia
First Choice Inspection Group, Inc. d/b/a Free Help Education Organization	Kihei	Hi`ilei Aloha LLC	Honolulu
First United Methodist Church of Honolulu	Honolulu	Hilo-Hamakua Community Development Corporation	
Friends of the Children's Justice Center of Maui	Wailuku	Hina Mauka	Kaneohe
Friends of the Library of Hawaii		HIVET	Honolulu
Hale Kipa		Honolulu Community Action Program	Honolulu
Hanapepe Economic Alliance		Honolulu Museum of Art	Honolulu
		Honua Films, Inc.	
		Hui Kako`o O`	
		Laupahoehoe	Papaaloa

IHS, The Institute for Human Services	Honolulu	PHOCUSED	Honolulu
Iolani Palace	Honolulu	Read To Me International	Honolulu
Kai Loa, Inc.	Kaneohe	Responsive Caregivers of Hawai`i	Honolulu
Kailapa Community Association	Kamuela	Steadfast Housing Development Corporation	Honolulu
Kalamaula Homestead Association	Kaunakakai	TEK Consulting Service	Kaneohe
Kanu Hawaii, Hawaii Alliance for Progressive Action		The Food Basket, Inc.	Hilo
Kau Rural Health Community Association, Inc.	Pahala	The Outdoor Circle	Honolulu
Kaua`i Planning & Action Alliance	Lihue	Visitor Aloha Society of Hawaii	Honolulu
Kauai Habitat for Humanity, Inc.	Eleele	Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii	
Kauai United Way	LIHUE	W. M. Keck Observatory	Kamuela
Klapperich International Training Associates (KITA), LLC		Window of Hope	Pago Pago
Kohola Leo		Work Now Hawaii	Honolulu
Kokua Mau	Honolulu	YMCA of Honolulu	Honolulu
Ku'ikahi Mediation Center	Hilo	YWCA of Kauai	
Kupu	Kailua		
Lahaina Arts Association	Lahaina		
Lanai Community Health Center	Lanai City		
Lanakila Pacific	Honolulu		
Laupahoehoe Train Museum	Paaui		
Liljestrang Foundation	Honolulu		
Make-A-Wish Hawaii			
Malama Learning Center	Kapolei		
Maui Dance Council	Maui		
Maui Family YMCA	Kahului		
Maui Nui Botanical Gardens	Kahului		
Maunalua Fishpond Heritage Center			
Mental Health Association in Hawaii	Honolulu		
Molokai Child Abuse Prevention Pathways			
Na Keiki o Emalia	Wailuku		
Na Pu`uwai	Kaunakakai		
North Kohala Community Resource Center	Hawi		
Ocean View Community Association, Inc.	Ocean View		
PA`I Foundation	Honolulu		
Pacific Islanders In Communications	Honolulu		

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

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Hawai`i

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