The Honorable Luis Gutierrez
2408 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Gutierrez:

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,

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

Illinois

Updated March 9, 2018

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826CHI
Aging Care Connections
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Allow Good
Alternatives, Inc.
American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons
American Medical Association Foundation
Arthur J. Schmitt Foundation
Arts Alliance Illinois
Association of Fundraising Professionals - Chicago IL Chapter
Baker McGee Consulting
Ballet 5:8
Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago
Bridge Communities
Bright Promise Fund for Urban Christian Education
Career Resource Center
Center for Independent Futures
Central States SER
Chicago Botanic Garden
Chicago Community Loan Fund
Chicago Cultural Alliance
Chicago Dramatists
Chicago Global Health Alliance
Chicago Humanities Festival
Chicago Urban League
Child Care Center of Evanston
Children's Home Society of America
Children's Neuroblastoma Cancer Foundation
Children's Place Association
Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust
College Bound Opportunities
Community Behavioral Healthcare Association of Illinois
CommunityHealth
Conant Family Foundation
Concordia Place
Connections for the Homeless
Creative Partners
Cristo Rey St. Martin College Prep
Deborah's Place
Divine Sparks
Duke of Edinburgh's International Award USA
DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform
Ecker Center for Mental Health
Embarc
Erie Family Health Center
Erie Neighborhood House
Evanston Community Foundation
Evanston Symphony Orchestra Association
Executive Service Corps of Chicago
Facing Forward to End Homelessness
Family Bridges
Family Focus
Family Service and Mental Health Center of Cicero
Forefront
Friends of Downtown
Friends of the Chicago River
Gene Siskel Film Center
George M. Pullman Educational Foundation
GrantResources, LLC
Greater Chicago Food Depository
Growing Home, Inc.
Habitat for Humanity Chicago
Habitat for Humanity of Champaign County
Habitat for Humanity of Northern Fox Valley
Harris Theater for Music and Dance
High Concept Labs

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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                                      | Partnership for America's Children                                      |
| Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action                   | Pension Fund of the Christian Church                                      |
| Jewish Council for Public Affairs                            | Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement                                   |
| Jewish Federations of North America                         | Project Wet Foundation                                                    |
| Leadership USA                                               | Project Managers Without Borders                                          |
| League of American Orchestras                                | Public Citizen                                                            |
| League of Women Voters                                       | Rockefeller Brothers Fund                                                 |
| Leukemia Research Foundation                                 | Secular Coalition for America                                             |
| Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education | Senior Executives Association                                             |
| Lumina Foundation                                            | Seva Foundation                                                           |
| Lymphoma Foundation of America                               | Skillman Foundation                                                       |
| Migraine Research Foundation                                | Silicon Valley Community Foundation                                       |
| Mentors International                                        | Smith’s Food and Drug                                                     |
| Morino Ventures, LLC                                         | Social Velocity                                                           |
| National 4-H Council                                        | The Arc of the United States                                              |
| National Alliance of Community Economic Development          | The Aspen Institute                                                       |
| National Association of Health Data Organizations            | The Commonwealth Fund                                                     |
| National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) | The Dibble Institute                                                    |
| National Association of Watch and Collectors                 | The Educational Foundation of America                                      |
| National Association for Shoplifting Prevention              | The George Gund Foundation                                                |
| NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness                   | The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi                                         |
| National Center for Appropriate Technology                  | The Michael J. Fox Foundation                                             |
| National Center for Fire and Life Safety                     | The Ocean Foundation                                                      |
| National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome                      | The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation                                         |
| National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy               | The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society         |
| National Council of Behavioral Health                       | The Voter Participation Center                                            |
| National Council of Churches                                 | TIDES                                                                    |
| National Council of Nonprofits                               | Unemployment Services Trust                                               |
| National Council of Tribes                                  | Union for Reform Judaism                                                  |
| National Dance Education Organization                        | United Philanthropy Forum                                                 |
| National Hartford Centers of Gerontological Nursing Excellence | United Way Worldwide                                                      |
| National Human Services Assembly                             | University Professional & Continuing Education Association               |
| National Indian Child Welfare Association                   | US Lacrosse                                                              |
| National LGBTQ Task Force                                   | Vasculitis Foundation                                                     |
| National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation      | Volunteers in Medicine                                                    |
| National Runaway Safeline                                   | Volunteers of America                                                    |
| National Safe Place Network                                  | Voto Latino                                                              |
| National Tongan American Society                             | Wallace Global Fund                                                       |
| NEO Law Group                                                | WasteWater Education                                                     |
| North American Bramble Growers Research Foundation           | Weingart Foundation                                                       |
| OPERA America                                                | William and Flora Hewlett Foundation                                     |
| | | Words Without Borders                                       |
| | | World Day of Prayer USA                                     |
| | | World Neighbors, Inc.                                      |
| | | Youth Services America                                     |
| | | YWCA USA                                                  |