Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship
UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Jerry Moran
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Moran:

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,

Kansas

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Greater Kansas City
Church Administrative Professionals
Cunningham Children’s Home
Easter Seals
Falling Forward Foundation
Girls on the Run Serving Greater Kansas City
Grief Comfort, Inc.
Harvesters - The Community Food Network
HNC Living Foundation
International Essential Tremor Foundation
Junior League of Wichita
Kansas Appleseed
Kansas Association for Conservation and Environment
Kansas Association of Community Foundations
Kansas City Startup Foundation
Kitty City Kansas Rescue Learning Club of KCK
Midwest Hemophilia Association
Numana, Inc.
SAFEHOME, Inc.
Sophia Center
South Central Community Foundation
Steps Of Faith
The ALS Association Mid-America Chapter
UDL Implementation and Research Network
United Community Services of Johnson County
Wildwood Outdoor Education Center
Zimmerman Consulting

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 | International Primate Protection League |
| Baptist Women in Ministry | Issue One |
| Barr Foundation | Jessie Ball DuPont Fund |
| BoardSource | Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action |
| Brady Campaign and Center to Prevent Gun Violence | Jewish Council for Public Affairs |
| Camp Fire | Jewish Federations of North America |
| Campion Foundation | Leadership USA |
| Catholic Charities USA | League of American Orchestras |
| Catholic Mobilizing Network | League of Women Voters |
| Center for Health, Environment & Justice | Leukemia Research Foundation |
| Center for Inquiry | Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education |
| Charles Stewart Mott Foundation | Lumina Foundation |
| Citizen Schools | Lymphoma Foundation of America |
| CleanSlateNow | Migraine Research Foundation |
| Commonwealth Fund | Mentors International |
| Council on Foundations | Morino Ventures, LLC |
| Council for Global Equality | National 4-H Council |
| Dance USA | National Alliance of Community Economic Development |
| Dementia Society, Inc. | National Association of Charitable Gift Planners |
| Democracy 21 | National Association of Health Data Organizations |
| Destination & Travel Foundation | National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) |
| Dietel Partners, LLC | National Association of Watch and Collectors |
| Disability Rights Advocacy Fund | National Association for Shoplifting Prevention |
| Easter Seals | NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness |
| Ecology Project International | National Center for Appropriate Technology |
| Engineering Conferences International | National Center for Fire and Life Safety |
| Episcopal Relief & Development | National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome |
| Feed the Children | National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy |
| Feeding America | National Council of Behavioral Health |
| Fidesco USA | National Council of Churches |
| Food & Water Watch | National Council of Nonprofits |
| Ford Foundation | National Council of Tribes |
| Free Press | National Dance Education Organization |
| Girl Scouts of the USA | National Hartford Centers of Gerontological Nursing Excellence |
| Girls Inc. | National Human Services Assembly |
| Global Integrity | National Indian Child Welfare Association |
| Goodwill Industries International, Inc. | National LGBTQ Task Force |
| Grantmakers for Effective Organizations | National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation |
| Greater Nonprofits | National Runaway Safeline |
| GuideStar | National Safe Place Network |
| Habitat for Humanity International | National Tongan American Society |
| Harbor Compliance | NEO Law Group |
| HawkWatch International | |
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