Dear Representative Lewis:

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,

Minnesota

AdoptAClassroom.org  Minneapolis  Edina
Albert Lea Family YMCA  Albert Lea  Elk River
Americans United for Separation of Church and State - MN Chapter  Minneapolis  St. Paul
ArtStart  Minneapolis  Minneapolis
Asian Law Alliance  San Jose  Minneapolis
Cancer Wig Foundation, Inc.  Edina  Minneapolis
Caponi Art Park  Eagan  Minneapolis
Charities Review Council  St. Paul  Minneapolis
Chicago Avenue Fire Arts Center  Minneapolis  Minneapolis
Creation In Common  Brainerd  Minneapolis
Follow the Paths  Chanhammen  Minneapolis
Friends of Chimbote  Grand Rapids  Minneapolis
Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation  Minneapolis  Minneapolis
Jewish Family Service of St. Paul  St. Paul  Minneapolis
Lake Superior Freethinkers  Duluth  Minneapolis
MAP for Nonprofits  St. Paul  Minneapolis
Minneapolis Institute of Arts  Minneapolis  Minneapolis
Minnesota Aids Project  Minneapolis  Minneapolis
Minnesota Communities Caring for Children  St. Paul  Minneapolis
Minnesota Council of Nonprofits  Minneapolis  Minneapolis
Minnesota Council on Foundations  Minneapolis  Minneapolis
Minnesota Music Educators Association  Brooklyn Center  Minneapolis
Mu Performing Arts  Minneapolis / St. Paul  Minneapolis
North House Folk School  Saint Paul  Saint Paul
North Suburban Access Corporation  Roseville  Saint Paul
Northwest Area Foundation  St. Paul  St. Paul
Our Saviour's Community Services  Minneapolis  Minneapolis
People Reaching Out to People, PROP RESOURCE, Inc.  Eden Prairie  Minneapolis
Robertson Law Office, LLC  Minneapolis  Saint Paul
Saint Paul Interfaith Network  Saint Paul  Saint Paul
Salon & Spa Professional Association Sandweiss & Associates  Minneapolis  Saint Paul
Sherburne County Area United Way  Minneapolis  St. Paul
Small Sums  Minneapolis  Owatonna
The Global Justice Institute  Minneapolis  Minneapolis
The Womadix Fund  Minneapolis  Minneapolis
Theater Mu, Inc.  Minneapolis  Minneapolis
Tubman Urban Homeworks  Minneapolis  Minneapolis
United Way of Steele County Volunteers of America Minnesota and Wisconsin  Owatonna  Minneapolis
Vox Corda Western Communities Action Network, Inc.  Mound  Stillwater
Youth Service Bureau, Inc.  Minneapolis  Stillwater
YWCA Minneapolis  Minneapolis  Minneapolis

National Organizations

Abila  Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities  AdoptAClassroom.org
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 Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.
American Physiological Society  American Red Cross
Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

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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