

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Rob J. Portman
448 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Portman:

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,

Ohio			
Action for Children	Columbus	Equitas Health	Columbus
Affecting Community		Far West Center	Westlake
Transformation d/b/a		Fieldstone Farm Therapeutic	
Oasis House	Dayton	Riding Center	Chagrin Falls
Aikey Foundation, Inc.	Wellington	Food For Thought	Toledo
Akron Community		Franciscan Earth Literacy	
Foundation	Akron	Center	Tiffin
Arthur Morgan Institute for		Friends of the Cultural Arts	
Community Solutions	Yellow Springs	Center	Columbus
Bethany House Services	Cincinnati	Glaciy Theatre Collective	
Big Brothers Big Sisters of		Goodwill Columbus	Columbus
Shelby & Darke County	Sidney	Green Hills Community	West Liberty
Bryan Area Foundation	Bryan	Habitat for Humanity of	
Business for Peace		Greater Cincinnati	Cincinnati
Community Development		Habitat for Humanity, Mid-	
Foundation (B4P		Ohio	Columbus
CODEFOUND)	Blacklick	Hannah's Treasure Chest	Centerville
Cancer Patient Services	Findlay	Harmony Project	Columbus
Circle of Peace International	Marietta	Havar, Inc.	Athens
City Year Columbus	Columbus	Homeport	Columbus
Clark County Historical		House of New Hope	Saint Louisville
Society	Springfield	Housing Research &	
Cleveland Zoological Society	Cleveland	Advocacy Center	Cleveland
Cogswell Hall, Inc.	Cleveland	Humility of Mary Housing	
Columbus School for Girls	Columbus	Jarvis Gibson Foundation	
Community Foundation of		Kendal at Granville	Granville
Lorain County	Elyria	Lake Erie Swimming	
Community Kitchen	Columbus	LGBT Community Center of	
Corporation for Findlay		Greater Cleveland	
Market	Cincinnati	LifeSpan	Hamilton
Corporation for Ohio		Mobile Meals of Toledo, Inc.	Toledo
Appalachian Development		Morino Ventures, LLC	Rocky River
Crime Victim Services	Lima	Multifaith Campus Alliance	
Daybreak	Dayton	of the Miami Valley	Dayton
Dayton Foundation	Dayton	Neighborhood Housing	
Disability Foundation, Inc.	Dayton	Services of Greater	
Dobama Theatre	Cleveland Heights	Cleveland	Cleveland
Dublin Arts Council	Dublin	Newark-Granville Symphony	
E&L Company	Youngstown	Orchestra	Newark
Early Childhood Resource		Non Profit Evolution	Columbus
Center	Canton	Ohio Association of Child	
Easter Seals Serving Greater		Caring Agencies	Columbus
Cincinnati	Cincinnati	Ohio Association of	
Edheads	Hilliard	Foodbanks	Columbus

Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations - OANO Columbus
 Ohio CDC Association Columbus
 Ohio Domestic Violence Network Columbus
 Ohio Environmental Council Columbus
 Ohio League For Nursing North Olmsted
 Ohio Valley Recovery Incorporated Bridgeport
 Perry County Soccer League Crooksville
 Philanthropy Ohio Columbus
 Preferred Properties, Inc. Toledo
 Prevent Blindness, Ohio Affiliate
 Sears-Swetland Family Foundation Bratenahl
 Seeds of Hope Tiffin
 Sisters of St. Francis Tiffin
 Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth Delphos
 St. Francis Spirituality Center Tiffin
 Stonewall Columbus Columbus
 StriveTogether Cincinnati
 Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank Cincinnati
 The Central Ohio Symphony Delaware
 The Community Foundation for Crawford County Bucyrus
 The Dakota Center Dayton
 The Foodbank, Inc. Dayton
 The Gathering Place Beachwood
 The George Gund Foundation Cleveland
 The Problem Gambling Network of Ohio Columbus
 The Sindisa Fund Hillsboro
 The UpTown Association, Inc. Toledo
 Toledo Ballet Toledo
 Toledo Community Foundation Toledo
 Transitions, Inc. Zanesville
 United Disability Services Akron
 United Way of Gallia County Gallipolis
 United Way of Greater Cleveland Cleveland
 United Way of Medina County Medina
 United Way of Summit County Akron

United Way of Williams County Bryan
 Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio Columbus
 VSA Ohio Columbus
 West Side Catholic Center Cleveland
 WomenSafe Chardon
 YWCA Alliance Alliance
 YWCA Dayton
 YWCA Greater Cincinnati Cincinnati
 YWCA of Hamilton, OH West Chester
 YWCA Warren Warren

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

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Ohio

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