

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Bill Johnson
1710 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Johnson:

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

Ohio Association of
Nonprofit Organizations -
OANO Columbus
Ohio CDC Association
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
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