

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
313 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Merkley:

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,

Oregon			
Alano Club of Portland	Portland	Friends of the West Slope Library	Portland
Alisa Blum & Associates		Fritz Consulting	Bend
Anne E. Denecke, PC		Give Voice	
Birthingway College of Midwifery	Portland	Go To Help, LLC	Portland
Breast Friends, Oregon		Grantmakers of Oregon and Southwest Washington	
Cannabis Certification Council	Portland	Grants Pass Museum of Art	Grants Pass
CASA of Oregon	Sherwood	Grounded Solutions Network	
Cascades Raptor Center	Eugene	Health Care for All-Oregon	Portland
Cat Adoption Team	Sherwood	Heart of Oregon Corps	Bend
Children's Advocacy Center of Lincoln County	Newport	In This Together	Troutdale
Chinquapin Center for the Arts	Grants Pass	Itching to Help! NPC	
Coalition Advocating for Animals	Salem	Jayne Cravens, Consultant	Forest Grove
Coastal Celtic Society	Coos Bay	Juliette's House Child Abuse Intervention Center	McMinnville
Cogeo	Portland	Kathy Kniep Consulting	Portland
College Dreams	Grants Pass	La Pine Community Kitchen	La Pine
Columbia Pacific Food Bank	Saint Helens	Lake County Resources Initiative	Lakeview
Community Housing Fund	Beaverton	Laudato si' USA	Portland
Community Warehouse		Lewis & Clark Montessori Charter School	
Cornerstone Community Housing	Eugene	Lora & Martin Kelley Family Foundation	Portland
Cottage Theatre	Cottage Grove	MacKenzie Community Track & Field	Vida
Creswell at Home, Inc.	Creswell	Main Street Mosier	Mosier
CTThompson Consulting	Eugene	Meals on Wheels People	Portland
Dana L Brown Consulting	Portland	Meyer Memorial Trust	Portland
Delgani String Quartet	Eugene	Molalla Warming Center	Molalla
Donate Life Northwest	Portland	Mosaic Consulting	Portland
Eastco Diversified Services, Inc.	Gresham	Mother Teresa Home d/b/a Magdalene Home	Medford
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon	Portland	Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp	Portland
F.I.N.F.I.D. International Foundation	Portland	Mysten Shenker, CPA	Portland
Facilitation & Process, LLC	Portland	National Indian Child Welfare Association	Portland
Four Rivers Health Care	Ontario	NE Coalition of Neighborhoods	Portland
Friendly House	Portland	Newberg Area Habitat for Humanity	Newberg
Friends Of South Slough	Coos Bay	Nonprofit Association of Oregon	Portland
Friends of the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge	Sherwood		

Northwest College of the Liberal Arts Portland
 Northwest Pilot Project, Inc. Portland
 ONABEN Portland
 Oregon Food Bank Portland
 Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club Portland
 Oregon Tilth
 OregonASK Wilsonville
 ORI Community and Evaluation Services Eugene
 People for Parks Oregon Portland
 Phoenix Finance Portland
 Phoenix Rising Transitions Gresham
 Portland Homeless Family Solutions Portland
 Raziah Roushan, Inc. Beaverton
 Renewable Northwest Portland
 Returning Veterans Project
 Rogue Valley Chorale Association Rogue River
 Rogue Valley Youth Choruses
 ROSE Community Development Portland
 Shangri La Corporation Salem
 Silverton Together, Inc. Silverton
 Society for Syncopated Drumming Portland
 Sojourner Education Foundation Milwaukie
 Southern Oregon Child and Family Council Central Point
 SPOON Portland
 St. Vincent de Paul Society Eugene
 Tanker 61 Memorial
 The Ford Family Foundation Roseburg
 The Learning Commons Portland
 The Museum At Warm Springs
 The Northwest Catholic Counseling Center Portland
 THSC
 Tom McCall Legacy Project Milwaukie
 Transition Projects Portland
 United Way of Columbia County Rainier
 Vernonia Hands on Art Center Vernonia
 Wellsprings Friends School Eugene
 Western Arts Alliance Portland

Willamette Resources and Educational Network Eugene
 Write Around Portland Portland
 Yamhill CDC d/b/a
 Community Home McMinnville
 Yamhill Community Action
 Partnership Food Bank McMinnville

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
National Organization for Albinism and
Hypopigmentation
National Runaway Safeline
National Safe Place Network
National Tongan American Society

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Oregon

NEO Law Group
North American Bramble Growers Research
Foundation

Youth Services America
YWCA USA

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.