Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Suzanne M. Bonamici
439 Cannon House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Bonamici:

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,

[List of organizations]

Oregon

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