

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Glenn W. Thompson Jr.
124 Cannon House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Thompson:

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,

Pennsylvania			
A Woman's Concern	Lancaster	Centre Wildlife Care	Lemont
ACLAMO Family Centers	Norristown	Chester County Historical Society	West chester
Acquired Brain Injury Network of Pennsylvania	Lansdale	Christian Youth Fellowship, Inc.	Pittsburgh
AFP-Greater Philadelphia Chapter	Philadelphia	Civic Square	Pittsburgh
Allegheny County Library Association	Pittsburgh	Colcom Foundation	Pittsburgh
American Insight	Philadelphia	COMMON Education Foundation	
Army Heritage Center Foundation	Carlisle	Commonwealth Youth Choirs	Philadelphia
Auberle	McKeesport	Communities In Schools of the Lehigh Valley	Breinigsville
Aurora Philanthropic Consulting, LLC	King of Prussia	Coro Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh
Balanced Heart Healing Center, Inc.	Mars	Cotlar and Cotlar	Doylestown
Beacon Clinic for Health and Hope	Harrisburg	Dementia Society, Inc.	Doylestown
Berks Community Action Program, Inc.	Reading	DePaul School for Hearing and Speech	Pittsburgh
Berks County Community Foundation	Reading	Development Consultants	Philadelphia
Beyond Celiac		Dignity Housing	
Bower & Co.		Diversity in Action	
Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center	Allentown	Donald and Sylvia Robinson Family Foundation	Pittsburgh
Breast Cancer Support Services of Berks	West Reading	Don't Stop Dreamin'	Butler
Brother's Brother Foundation	Pittsburgh	Downtown Lewistown, Inc.	Lewistown
Bucks County Housing Group	Ivyland	Elayne Howard & Associates	
Butler YWCA	Butler	Employment Opportunity and Training Center of Northeast Pennsylvania	Scranton
Caitlin's Smiles		Energize, Inc.	Philadelphia
Calvary United Methodist Church of Windber PA	Windber	Family Promise of Lyco County	Williamsport
Camp Koala	Kingston	Family Service Association of Northeastern Pennsylvania	Wilkes-Barre
Casita Copan	Pittsburgh	Family Service of Chester County	West Chester
Center for Literacy, World Affairs Council	Philadelphia	Family Services of Western PA	Pittsburgh
Central Pennsylvania Food Bank		Fishes & Loaves	
Centre County Women's Resource Center	State College	Cooperative Ministries	Pittsburgh
		Frankford Community Development Corporation	Philadelphia
		Free Library of Philadelphia	Philadelphia

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Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation	Philadelphia	KenCrest	Blue Bell
Friends Fiduciary Corporation	Philadelphia	Kennett Area Senior Center	Kennett Square
Friends of SummerSounds	Greensburg	Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America	Sharpsburg
Genesee Area Library	Genesee	Kutztown Community Partnership	Kutztown
Genuardi Family Foundation	Blue Bell	Lancaster County Community Foundation	Lancaster
Georgia E. Gregory Interdenominational School of Music	Philadelphia	Lancaster Farmland Trust	Strasburg
Glen Foerd Conservation Corporation	Philadelphia	Lancaster Lebanon Habitat for Humanity	
Global Connections		Laurel Foundation	Pittsburgh
Global Links	Pittsburgh	Lawrence County Habitat for Humanity	
Grantmakers of Western PA	Pittsburgh	Leadership Centre County	State College
Greater Erie Area Habitat for Humanity	Erie	Leadership York	York
Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance	Philadelphia	Lodge Life Services, Inc.	Lancaster
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank	Duquesne	Lycoming County Health Improvement Coalition	Williamsport
Habitat for Humanity of Bucks County	Chalfont	Manchester Youth Development Center	Pittsburgh
Habitat for Humanity of Chester County	Coatesville	Mary & Alexander Laughlin Children's Center	Sewickley
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	Melanie Dante, Consultant	
Habitat for Humanity of Montgomery County, PA		Mom's House, Inc. of Greater Philadelphia	Phoenixville
Habitat for Humanity of the Greater Harrisburg Area	Harrisburg	Montgomery Early Learning Centers	Narberth
Harbor Compliance		Moravian Open Door, Inc.	
Hazleton Area Public Library	Hazleton	Musicopia	Philadelphia
Historic Sugartown, Inc.	Malvern	National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors	Columbia
Hollow Oak Land Trust	Moon Township	National Council of Jewish Women, Pittsburgh Section	Pittsburgh
Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania		National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation	
Impact100 Philadelphia	Haverford	Nazareth Housing Services	Pittsburgh
InfoRich Group, Inc.	Drexel Hill	New Castle Community Y	New Castle
Inglis	Philadelphia	Newport Public Library	Newport
Inter-Mission	Narberth	Northland Public Library Foundation	Wexford
International Performing Arts for Youth	Philadelphia	Opportunity Fund	Pittsburgh
Jazz Bridge Project	Glenside	Outreach Teen & Family Services	Pittsburgh
Jewish Community Foundation of Central PA	Harrisburg	PA Campus Compact	
Jewish Federation of Greater Harrisburg	Harrisburg	PA Mental Health	
Junior League of the Lehigh Valley	Center Valley	Consumers' Association	Harrisburg PA
Kelly Anne Dolan Memorial Fund	Fort Washington	Partnership for Better Health	Carlisle

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Pearl S. Buck International	Perkasie	The Florencia M Mack	
Pennsylvania Association of		Educational Fund	Philadelphia
Nonprofit Organizations	Harrisburg	The HBE Foundation	Bryn Mawr
Pennsylvania Interfaith		The Lectionary Company	Philadelphia
Power & Light	State College	The Luzerne Foundation	Wilkes-Barre
Pennsylvania Lumber		The Merchants Fund	Philadelphia
Museum Associates	Ulysses	The University of the Arts	Philadelphia
Philly Fellows	Philadelphia	The Untours Foundation	Media
Phipps Conservatory and		Tick Tock Early Learning	
Botanical Gardens	Pittsburgh	Center	Avondale
Phoenixville Area		Transitions of PA	Lewisburg
Community Services	Phoenixville	TriCounty Active Adult	
Pinebrook Family Answers	Allentown	Center	Pottstown
Pleasantville United Church		Tri-County Patriots for	
of Christ	Chalfont	Independent Living	Washington
Plum Senior Community		United Way of Adams	
Center	Plum	County	Gettysburg
Praise Consulting	Langhorne	United Way of Beaver	
Recycle Bicycle Harrisburg	Carlisle	County	Monaca
Renew Theaters, Inc.	Doylestown	United Way of Blair County	Altoona
Richard Erstad Consulting	Ardmore	United Way of Butler County	Butler
Robert Johnson Smith		United Way of Erie County	Erie
Family Life Center	Philadelphia	United Way of Lackawanna	
Roots Tribe Yoga	Philadelphia	and Wayne Counties	Scranton
Rosenlund Family		United Way of Lancaster	
Foundation		County	Lancaster
Samara: Nurture and		United Way of Mifflin-Juniata	Lewistown
Education for Parents	Elizabethtown	United Way of Pennsylvania	
Schuylkill Women in Crisis	Pottsville	United Way of York County,	
SeeChange Consulting	Philadelphia	PA	York
Sexual Assault Resource &		Valerie M. Jones Associates	Media
Counseling Center		Waverly Community House	Waverly
(SARCC)	Lebanon	Women Against Abuse	Philadelphia
Sisters of Mercy	Pittsburgh	Women for Sobriety	
Society of the Holy Child		Women's Resource Center	Wayne
Jesus, American Province		Women's Way	Philadelphia
Spiritrust Lutheran Home		York Day Nursery	York
Care & Hospice	Chambersburg	YWCA Bradford	Bradford
Starfinder Foundation	Philadelphia	YWCA Greater Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh
Strategy Solutions	Erie	YWCA Northcentral PA	Williamsport
Tabor Community Services	Lancaster	YWCA Tri-County Area	Pottstown
TeamChildren	Audubon	YWCA York	York
The Alfred & Mary Douty			
Foundation	Philadelphia		
The Bodhana Group	Ephrata		
The Burd Group			
The Children's Museum	Bloomsburg		
The Conococheague			
Institute for the Study of			
Cultural Heritage	Mercersburg		
The Dietrich W. Botstiber			
Foundation	Media		

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
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