

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Beto O'Rourke
1330 Longworth House Office Building
United State House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative O'Rourke:

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,

Texas			
Abbe & Associates: Fundraising and Nonprofit Consultants	Arlington	disABILITYsa	San Antonio
Abell Photography		El Buen Samaritano Episcopal Mission	Austin
Abila	Austin	Equity for Women in the Church, Inc.	Dallas
All Blind Children of Texas	Austin	Fellowship Southwest	Coppell
Alley Theatre	Houston	For the Children, Inc., d/b/a Arts & Entertainment 4 DFW Youths	Plano
Amarillo Habitat for Humanity		Fort Bend Habitat for Humanity	Stafford
American Heart Association	Dallas	Fort Hood Area Habitat for Humanity	Killeen
Americans United for Separation of Church & State - San Antonio, TX Chapter	San Antonio	Fort Worth Area Habitat for Humanity, Inc.	Fort Worth
Americans United for Separation of Church and State - Houston chapter	Houston	Foundation Communities	Austin
Andrew Delaney Foundation	Austin	Girl Scouts of Central Texas	Austin
Appamada	Austin	Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas	Dallas
Arts Council of Midland	Midland	Granny's Place Ministries	Duncanville
Associated Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors of Texas, Inc.	Buda	GrantBook	
Austin Habitat for Humanity	Austin	Guardian Angels for Solder's Pet	
Bay Area Turning Point, Inc.		Gulf Coast Big Brothers & Big Sisters, Inc.	Galveston
BEST of Texas Robotics	Plano	Habitat for Humanity Abilene, Inc.	Abilene
Bexar County Opportunities Industrialization Center, Inc.	San Antonio	Habitat for Humanity Denton County	Denton
Big Medium	Austin	Habitat for Humanity of Grayson County	Sherman
Brazos Bend Guardianship Services	Rosenberg	Habitat for Humanity of Greater Garland	Garland
Bryan/College Station Habitat for Humanity	Bryan	Habitat for Humanity of San Angelo	San Angelo
Caritas of Austin	Austin	Habitat for Humanity of Smith County	Tyler
Chavisjah Supportive Services	Missouri City	Habitat for Humanity of Williamson County, Texas, Inc.	Georgetown
Children Helpers Foundations	Cape Coast	Hardin-Simmons University	Abilene
Christian Women's Job Corps of El Paso		Hero Dogs, Inc.	Grapevine
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities	Austin	Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas	San Antonio
Community Integrated Employment		House of Hope, Inc.	Glenn Heights
Congregation Agudas Achim		Houston Children Give Back	Houston
Cultivating Leaders Achieving Scholastic Success	Fort Worth	Houston Habitat for Humanity	
Dallas Area Parkinsonism Society	Dallas	IT'S TIME TEXAS	Austin
Dallas Parks Foundation	Dallas		

Join Us For Justice, the El Paso Chapter of Americans United	El Paso	The Awty International School	Houston
Journal of the History of Ideas, Inc.	College Station	The Baby Stewart Foundation	
Latinitas	Austin and El Paso	The Fallen Linemen Organization	
Launch Pad Job Club	Austin	The Gleaning Network of Texas d/b/a GROW North Texas	Dallas
LevelUp Institute	Austin	The Montrose Center	Houston
Lions Club International	Bellmead	Thousands Watching	Houston
Literacy Advance of Houston		Trinity Center	Austin
Live Theatre League of Tarrant County	Fort Worth	United Way of Greater Baytown Area & Chambers County	Baytown
Longview Habitat for Humanity, Inc.	Longview	United Way of Greater Houston	Houston
Madeleine Crouch & Co., Inc.	Dallas	United Way of Mid & South Jefferson County	Port Arthur
Malone Law Firm	Arlington	United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County	San Antonio
Midland Habitat for Humanity	Midland	Vision Weavers Consulting, LLC	Humble
Mission Granbury Inc.		Vistage Group 3627	Houston
North Collin County Habitat for Humanity	McKinney	Volunteers of America Texas	Arlington
One Voice Central Texas	Austin	Waco Habitat for Humanity	Waco
Oralia Lichtenberger	Laredo	Young Nonprofit Professionals Network of Austin	Austin
Pasadena Habitat for Humanity	Pasadena	Young Women's Christian Association of San Antonio, TX	San Antonio
Pastors for Texas Children	Fort Worth	YWCA of Lubbock	Lubbock
Peace of Christ Church	Round Rock		
REACH	Dallas		
Resource Center	Dallas		
Rio Bravo Wildlife Institute	Brownsville		
SA Leadership Excel Academy	San Antonio		
San Antonio Lighthouse For The Blind	San Antonio		
Sewa International	Houston		
Sexual Assault Resource Center	Bryan		
Social Velocity	Austin		
South Main Baptist Church, Houston	Houston		
South Texas Literacy Coalition	Edinburg		
Standish Foundation for Child & Family Centered Healthcare	Austin		
State of Texas Alliance for Recycling			
Swan Songs	Austin		
Taps 'n Tunes Productions, Inc.	Hurst		
Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations	Houston		
Texas Baptists Committed	Allen		
Texas One Voice d/b/a One Voice Texas	Houston		
Texoma Health Foundation	Denison		
The Arc of Fort Bend County	Sugar Land		

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

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Texas

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