Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Roger Williams
1323 Longworth House Office Building
United State House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Williams:

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

Texas
Join Us For Justice, the El Paso Chapter of Americans United
Journal of the History of Ideas, Inc.
Latinitas
Launch Pad Job Club
Lions Club International
Literacy Advance of Houston
Live Theatre League of Tarrant County
Longview Habitat for Humanity, Inc.
Madeleine Crouch & Co., Inc.
Malone Law Firm
Midland Habitat for Humanity
Mission Granbury Inc.
North Collin County Habitat for Humanity
One Voice Central Texas
Oralia Lichtenberger
Pasadena Habitat for Humanity
Pastors for Texas Children
Peace of Christ Church
REACH
Resource Center
Rio Bravo Wildlife Institute
SA Leadership Excel Academy
San Antonio Lighthouse For The Blind
Sewa International
Sexual Assault Resource Center
Social Velocity
South Main Baptist Church, Houston
South Texas Literacy Coalition
Standish Foundation for Child & Family Centered Healthcare
State of Texas Alliance for Recycling
Swan Songs
Taps 'n Tunes Productions, Inc.
Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations
Texas Baptists Committed
Texas One Voice d/b/a One Voice Texas
Texoma Health Foundation
The Arc of Fort Bend County
College Station
Austin and El Paso
Austin
Bellmead
Fort Worth
Longview
Dallas
Arlington
Midland
McKinney
Austin
Laredo
Pasadena
Fort Worth
Round Rock
Dallas
Brownsville
San Antonio
San Antonio
Houston
Edinburg
Austin
Austin
Houston
Allen
Houston
Denison
Sugar Land

The Awty International School
The Baby Stewart Foundation
The Fallen Linemen Organization
The Gleaning Network of Texas d/b/a GROW North Texas
The Montrose Center
Thousands Watching
Trinity Center
United Way of Greater Baytown Area & Chambers County
United Way of Greater Houston
United Way of Mid & South Jefferson County
United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County
Vision Weavers Consulting, LLC Vitage Group 3627
Volunteers of America Texas
Waco Habitat for Humanity
Young Nonprofit Professionals Network of Austin
Young Women's Christian Association of San Antonio, TX
YWCA of Lubbock

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 | Union for Reform Judaism |
| National Council of Behavioral Health | United Philanthropy Forum |
| National Council of Churches | United Way Worldwide |
| National Council of Nonprofits | University Professional & Continuing Education Association |
| National Council of Tribes | US Lacrosse |
| National Dance Education Organization | Vasculitis Foundation |
| National Hartford Centers of Gerontological Nursing Excellence | Volunteers in Medicine |
| National Human Services Assembly | Volunteers of America |
| National Indian Child Welfare Association | Voto Latino |
| National LGBTQ Task Force | Wallace Global Fund |
| National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation | WasteWater Education |
| National Runaway Safeline | Weingart Foundation |
| National Safe Place Network | William and Flora Hewlett Foundation |
| National Tongan American Society | Words Without Borders |
| NEO Law Group | World Day of Prayer USA |
| North American Bramble Growers Research Foundation | World Neighbors, Inc. |
| OPERA America | Youth Services America |
| Partnership for America's Children | YWCA USA |
| 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 | |