Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship
UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Bobby C. Scott
1201 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Scott:

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,

Virginia

Amara Legal Center
American Alliance of Museums
ANA
Art League, commission for the arts
Association of Children's Museums
Association of Fundraising Professionals
Autumn Valley Guardianship
Bernardine Franciscan Sisters Foundation
Beverley Hills Community United Methodist Church
Blue Ridge Independent Living Center
Bolinger Advisors, LLC
Capital Caring
Capital Hospice d/b/a Capital Caring
Catholic Charities USA
Center for Health Environment and Justice
Center for Nonprofit Excellence
CH Brownstein
Child Care Aware of Virginia
Children's Assistive Technology Service
Clarke Association Content
Colon & Associates, LLC
Commonwealth Baptist Church
Council on Foundations
DePaul Community Resources
Evolve Nonprofit
Farmville Area Habitat for Humanity
FeedMore, Inc.
Friends of the Rappahannock
Geek@Heart

Girl Scouts of the Colonial Coast
Gloucester Mathews Care Clinic
Goodwin House Foundation
GuideStar
Habitat for Humanity Peninsula & Greater Williamsburg
Helping Overcome Poverty's Existence, Inc.
Hope Resources Incorporated
Housing Development Corporation of Hampton Roads
Lynchburg College Bonner Leader Program
MACAA (Monticello Area Community Action Agency)
MajorGiving.com
Morrison Nonprofit Transitions
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Hartford Center of Gerontological Nursing Excellence
National Philharmonic
Northern Virginia Mediation Service
On the Road Collaborative
PATH Foundation
Peace Operations Training Institute
Petra Peacebuilders, Inc.
ProlNspire
Rainmakers LLC
Rappahannock United Way
ReadyKids
Richmond Volleyball Club
River Road Church, Baptist
Sabu International School Foundation
Second Chance At Renewing Self, Inc.

Alexandria
Arlington
Arlington
Alexandria
Arlington
Suffolk
Arlington
Basye
Newport News
Alexandria
Roanoke
McLean
Falls Church
Falls Church
Charlottesville
Richmond
Richmond
Roanoke
Dunn Loring
Vienna
Alexandria
Arlington
Roanoke
Alexandria
Farmville
Richmond
Fredericksburg
Reston

Chesapeake
Gloucester Point
Alexandria
Williamsburg
Newport News
Wytheville
Newport News
Lynchburg
Charlottesville
Winchester
Woodstock
Arlington
Reston
Falls Church
Fairfax
Warrenton
Irvington
Arlington
Arlington
Fredericksburg
Charlottesville
Henrico
Richmond
N. Chesterfield
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STEM for Her  
Taking Action for Special Kids  
The Advancement Foundation  
The Arc of Harrisonburg and Rockingham  
The Art League  
Traveling Players Ensemble  
United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County  
United Way of Montgomery, Radford & Floyd  
United Way Worldwide Valley Program for Aging Services  
Vietnamese Resettlement Association  
Virginia Chapter - Americans United for Separation of Church and State  
Virginia Institute of Pastoral Care  
Volunteers of America  
Washington County Va. Habitat for Humanity  
Williamsburg Community Foundation  
YWCA of Central Virginia  
YWCA South Hampton Roads

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

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
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