

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Dave A. Brat
1628 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Brat:

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	Alexandria	Girl Scouts of the Colonial Coast	Chesapeake
American Alliance of Museums	Arlington	Gloucester Mathews Care Clinic	Gloucester Point
ANA	Alexandria	Goodwin House Foundation	Alexandria
Art League, commission for the arts	Suffolk	GuideStar	Williamsburg
Association of Children's Museums	Arlington	Habitat for Humanity Peninsula & Greater Williamsburg	Newport News
Association of Fundraising Professionals	Arlington	Helping Overcome Poverty's Existence, Inc.	Wythevill
Autumn Valley Guardianship	Basye	Hope Resources Incorporated	
Bernardine Franciscan Sisters Foundation	Newport News	Housing Development Corporation of Hampton Roads	Newport News
Beverly Hills Community United Methodist Church	Alexandria	Lynchburg College Bonner Leader Program	Lynchburg
Blue Ridge Independent Living Center	Roanoke	MACAA (Monticello Area Community Action Agency)	Charlottesville
Bolinger Advisors, LLC	McLean	MajorGiving.com	Winchester
Capital Caring	Falls Church	Morrison Nonprofit Transitions	Woodstock
Capital Hospice d/b/a Capital Caring	Falls Church	NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness	Arlington
Catholic Charities USA		National Hartford Center of Gerontological Nursing Excellence	Reston
Center for Health Environment and Justice	Charlottesville	National Philharmonic	Falls Church
Center for Nonprofit Excellence	Richmond	Northern Virginia Mediation Service	Fairfax
CH Brownstein	Richmond	On the Road Collaborative	
Child Care Aware of Virginia	Richmond	PATH Foundation	Warrenton
Children's Assistive Technology Service	Roanoke	Peace Operations Training Institute	
Clarke Association Content	Dunn Loring	Petra Peacebuilders, Inc.	Irvington
Colon & Associates, LLC	Vienna	Prolnspire	Arlington
Commonwealth Baptist Church	Alexandria	Rainmakers LLC	Arlington
Council on Foundations	Arlington	Rappahannock United Way	Fredericksburg
DePaul Community Resources	Roanoke	ReadyKids	Charlottesville
Evolve Nonprofit	Alexandria	Richmond Volleyball Club	Henrico
Farmville Area Habitat for Humanity	Farmville	River Road Church, Baptist	Richmond
FeedMore, Inc.	Richmond	Sabu International School Foundation	
Friends of the Rappahannock	Fredericksburg	Second Chance At Renewing Self, Inc.	N. Chesterfield
Geek@Heart	Reston		

STEM for Her
 Taking Action for Special Kids North Tazewell
 The Advancement Foundation Vinton
 The Arc of Harrisonburg and Rockingham Harrisonburg
 The Art League Alexandria
 Traveling Players Ensemble Great Falls
 United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County Harrisonburg
 United Way of Montgomery, Radford & Floyd Christiansburg
 United Way Worldwide
 Valley Program for Aging Services Waynesboro
 Vietnamese Resettlement Association Fairfax County
 Virginia Chapter - Americans United for Separation of Church and State Virginia Beach
 Virginia Institute of Pastoral Care Richmond
 Volunteers of America Alexandria
 Washington County Va. Habitat for Humanity Abingdon
 Williamsburg Community Foundation Williamsburg
 YWCA of Central Virginia
 YWCA South Hampton Roads Norfolk

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
 Champion 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

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Virginia

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