Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship
UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
306 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Manchin:

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,

West Virginia

Augusta Levy Learning Center
Aurora Lights
Beckley Area Foundation, Inc.
Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Tri-State
Big Creek People in Action
Burlington United Methodist Family Services
CAMC Foundation
Catholic Charities West Virginia
Charles Town Now
Child and Youth Advocacy Center
Church Without Walls Ministries, Inc.
Collective Impact, LLC
Community Networks, Inc.
Covenant House
Dana & Ethel Ervin Scholarship Fund
Facing Hunger Food Bank
Family Refuge Center, Lewisburg, WV
Friends of the Cheat, Inc.
Friends of the Lewis House, Inc.
Fuller Center for Housing of Beckley, Inc.
Future of Nursing West Virginia
Global Outreach Foundation
Good Samaritan Free Clinic
Greenbrier County Committee on Aging
Greenbrier Valley Theatre
Habitat for Humanity of Kanawha and Putnam
HomeOwnership Center, Inc.
Huntington WV Area Habitat for Humanity
In Touch and Concerned, Inc.
Jackson County Developmental Center
Junior League of Wheeling
Just For Kids Child Advocacy Center
King's Daughters Child Care Center
League of Women Voters of Thurston County
Markley Memorial Chapel
Martinsburg ReNew
Member KVVP
Midwives Alliance of WV
Mission West Virginia, Inc.
MiTec
Mountain Hospice, Inc.
New River Gorge Learning Co-op
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
Ohio Valley Recovery, Inc.
Philanthropy West Virginia
Piney Creek Watershed Association
Pocahontas County Family Resource Network
Potomac Highlands Fuller Center
Preston Community Arts Center
Preston County Parks and Recreation Commission
Raising Clarity
Ruckman Heritage Scholarship Foundation
Spark! Imagination and Science Center
St. Agnes Catholic Church, Social Concerns Committee
St. John's / St. Vincent's Home, Inc.
Stone Strategies

Morgantown
Beckley
Wheeling
Charleston
Huntington
Wheeling
Olympia
Huttonsville
Martinsburg
Charleston
Hillsboro
Hurricane
Elkins
Belington
Fayetteville
Huntingtonville
Wheeling
Beckley
Marlinton
Franklin
Kingwood
Berkeley Springs
Lewisburg
Morgantown
Harpers Ferry
Wheeling
Charleston
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TEAM for West Virginia Children, Inc. Huntington
Terrell Ellis & Associates, Inc. Charleston
The Grant Advantage
Trillium Performing Arts Collective Lewisburg
Tug Valley Recovery Shelter Williamson
United Way of Greenbrier Valley Lewisburg
United Way of Southern West Virginia, Inc. Beckley
United Way of the River Cities Huntington
Unity Center Wheeling WV Wheeling
Wellspring of Greenbrier, Inc. Rupert
West Allis Players Community Theater Milwaukee
West Virginia Nonprofit Association
West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council Huntington
Wheeling Health Right, Inc. WV FREE Charleston
WV Professional Dance Company Beckley

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 Prevention
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
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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