

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED June 1, 2018

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
2162 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Pingree:

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.

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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,

Maine			
Acadia Center	Rockport	Literacy Volunteers -	Lewiston
Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine	Augusta	Androscoggin	
Beth C. Wright Cancer Resource Center	Ellsworth	Literacy Volunteers of Greater Sanford	
Bicycle Coalition of Maine	Portland	Loaves & Fishers, Inc.	
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southern Maine	Portland	Main Street Bath Maine	Bath
Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences	East Boothbay	Maine Alliance for Addiction Recovery	Augusta
Boothbay Harbor Memorial Library	Boothbay Harbor	Maine Association of Nonprofits	
Bridgton Community Center	Bridgton	Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault	
Brunswick Downtown Association	Brunswick	Maine Council of Churches	Portland
Castine Historical Society	Castine	Maine Crafts Association	Gardiner
Coastal Enterprises, Inc.	Brunswick	Maine Equal Justice Partners	Augusta
Coastal Opportunities		Maine Maritime Museum	Bath
Cobscook Bay Resource Center	Eastport	Maine Media College	Camden
Community Access to the Arts	Great Barrington	Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad Company & Museum	Portland
Community Partners, Inc.	Biddeford	Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)	Unity
Day One	South Portland	Maine Philanthropy Center	Portland
Dietel Partners, LLC	Yarmouth	Maine Preservation	Yarmouth
Downeast Coastal Conservancy	Machias	Maine Pretrial Services	Portland
Fifth Maine Regiment Museum, Peaks Island, ME	Peaks Island	Maine Public Health Association	Augusta
Friends of Casco Bay	South Portland	Maine Robotics	Orono
Friends of Fort Gorges	Portland	Maine State Society for the Protection of Animals	South Windham
Girls on the Run-Maine	Portland	Maine Women's Fund	Falmouth
Great Bay Services	Sanford	MCH, Inc.	Rockland
Hardy Girls Healthy Women	Waterville	Midcoast Conservancy	Wiscasset
Heritage Radio Society, Inc.	Yarmouth	Moosehead Marine Museum	Greenville
Justice For Our Neighbors		My Place Teen Center	Westbrook
Kennebec Valley Dental Coalition	Waterville	Natural Resources Council of Maine	Augusta
Laudholm Trust	Wells	Neighborhood House Club, Inc.	
LEAP, Inc.	Farmington	New Beginnings	Lewiston
LearningWorks	Portland	Oasis Free Clinics	Brunswick
Lift360	Portland		

P.A.W.S. Animal Adoption Center	Rockport	Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
Pierre Monteux School & Music Festival	Hancock	Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
Portland Chamber Music Festival	Portland	America Solidaria U.S.
Portland Conservatory of Music	Portland	American Alliance of Museums
Portland Stage Company	Portland	American Association of Anatomists
Rangeley Friends of the Arts	Rangeley	American Association of Physics Teachers
SAGE Maine	Hancock	American Association of Teachers of German
SailMaine	Portland	American Atheists
Sally A. Morris, Attorney at Law	Portland	American Bladder Cancer Society
SeniorsPlus	Lewiston	American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine
Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative	Portland	American Brass Chamber Music Association
Susan L. Curtis Charitable Foundation	Portland	American Conference of Academic Deans
Sweetser	Saco	American Heart Association
Syntiro	Readfield	American Historical Association
The Bingham Program	Augusta	American Jewish Committee
The Center for Wisdom's Women	Lewiston	American Medical Association Foundation
The Ecology School	Saco	American Physiological Society
The Hope-JG Foundation		American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.
The Iris Network	Scarborough	American Red Cross
The Maine Project for Fine Art Conservation-Project MEAC	Portland	Americans for the Arts
Three Rivers Land Trust	Springvale	Americans Promoting Study Abroad
Topsham, Maine Public Library	Topsham	Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Tri-County Literacy	Bath	Amyloidosis Foundation
United Way of York County	Kennebunk	Animal Legal Defense Fund
Upcycle Maine	North Berwick	Annie E. Casey Foundation
Uplift, Inc.	Gardiner	Anti-Defamation League
Victoria Mansion	Portland	Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
VMS Consulting	Scarborough	Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
Wardtown Mobile Home Cooperative	Freeport	Association of American Colleges and Universities
White Dog Communications	Westbrook	Association of Art Museum Directors
White Pine Programs	Cape Neddick	Association of Direct Response Fundraising Counsel
YWCA Central Maine	Lewiston	Association of Fundraising Professionals
YWCA Mount Desert Island		Association of Immunization Managers

National Organizations

Abila
 Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
 AdoptAClassroom.org
 African Diaspora United, Inc.

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
 Celiac Disease Foundation

Center for Health, Environment & Justice
Center for Inquiry
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Citizen Schools
CleanSlateNow
Common Cause
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
Millennium Water Alliance
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

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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 Soldiers and Sailors of America
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