

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt
260 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blunt:

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,

Missouri Organizations

After the Harvest	Kansas City	Heartland Foundation	
AIA		Hillcrest Ministries, Inc.	Liberty
Allied Arts Council of St. Joseph, MO, Inc.	St. Joseph	James McNary and Joshua Logan Memorial Scholarship	St. Louis
Americans United for Separation of Church and State - St. Louis Chapter	St. Louis	Kansas City Artists Coalition	Kansas City
ArtsTech	Kansas City	Kansas City Quality Improvement Consortium	
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Kansas City	Kansas City	Kansas City Symphony	Kansas City
BikeWalkKC	Kansas City	KCPT Public Television	
Bilingual International Assistant Services	St. Louis	KMD Consulting	
Blue River Watershed Association	Kansas City	Leadership USA, Inc.	Kansas City
BoysGrow		Lee's Summit Educational Foundation	Lee's Summit
Bridging The Gap	Kansas City	MainCor	Kansas City
Camp Fire	Kansas City	Metropolitan Orchestra of St. Louis	
Central Print	St. Louis	MHAH	
Christ Lutheran Church	Webster Groves	Missouri Botanical Garden	St. Louis
Connections to Success		Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence	Jefferson City
Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis	St. Louis	Missouri Family Health Council, Inc.	Ashland
Corey's Network, Inc.	Independence	NAMI Southwest Missouri	Springfield
Creative Reaction Lab	St. Louis	Network for Strong Communities	
Cristo Rey Kansas City High School	Kansas City	Nonprofit Connect	Kansas City
Diastole Scholars' Center	Kansas City	Nonprofit Leadership Alliance	Kansas City
Dribin and Associates	St. Louis	Nonprofit Missouri	Jefferson City
Episcopal City Mission	St. Louis	North Side Community School	
Episcopal Community Services, Heartland	Kansas City	Northeast Community Center	Kansas City
Francis Family Foundation	Kansas City	Northland Shepherd's Center	Kansas City
G and V Organization	Northwood	NorthWest Communities Development Corporation	Independence
GPS Missions	Greenfield	Optimist Club of St. Charles Missouri	St. Charles
Green Works in Kansas City	Kansas City	Our Little Haven	St. Louis
Habitat for Humanity of Francois County, Inc.	Farmington	Platte County Senior Fund	Kansas City
Habitat for Humanity Saint Louis	St. Louis	Platte Land Trust	Kansas City
Harvesters - The Community Food Network	Kansas City	Presbyterian Children's Homes & Services of MO	St. Louis County
Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City	Kansas City	Royals Charities	Kansas City
HealthEd Connect	Lee's Summit	Safe Connections	St. Louis
		Saint Louis Effort for AIDS	St. Louis
		SAVE, Inc.	Kansas City
		Shia Islamic Education Center	Wildwood
		Show Me KC Schools	Kansas City

Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired	St. Louis	Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
Southeast Missouri Food Bank	Sikeston	Association of American Colleges and Universities
Southtown Council	Kansas City	Association of Art Museum Directors
Special Olympics Missouri	Lee's Summit	Association of Direct Response Fundraising Counsel
St. Louis Area Foodbank	Bridgeton	Association of Fundraising Professionals
St. Teresa's Academy	Kansas City	Association of Immunization Managers
Synergy Group	Wentzville	Association of Nature Center Administrators
The Edgar Snow Memorial Foundation	Kansas City	Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
The Hope Center KC	Kansas City	Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
The South Cabin Group LLC	Wildwood	Baptist Women in Ministry
Turn the Page KC	Kansas City	Barr Foundation
Vasculitis Foundation	Kansas City	BoardSource
VisionServe Alliance	St. Louis	Brady Campaign and Center to Prevent Gun Violence
Wentzville School Foundation		Camp Fire
Women's Employment Network	Kansas City	Campion Foundation
Women's Foundation of Greater St. Louis	St. Louis	Catholic Charities USA
Wright Care Dentistry		Catholic Mobilizing Network

National Organizations

Abila		Center for Health, Environment & Justice
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.		Center for Inquiry
AdoptAClassroom.org		Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities		Citizen Schools
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation		CleanSlateNow
American Alliance of Museums		Commonwealth Fund
American Association of Anatomists		Council on Foundations
American Association of Physics Teachers		Council for Global Equality
American Association of Teachers of German		Dance USA
American Bladder Cancer Society		Dementia Society, Inc.
American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine		Democracy 21
American Brass Chamber Music Association		Destination & Travel Foundation
American Conference of Academic Deans		Dietel Partners, LLC
American Heart Association		Disability Rights Advocacy Fund
American Historical Association		Ecology Project International
American Jewish Committee		Engineering Conferences International
American Medical Association Foundation		Feed the Children
American Physiological Society		Feeding America
American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.		Food & Water Watch
American Red Cross		Ford Foundation
Americans for the Arts		Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers
Americans Promoting Study Abroad		Free Press
Americans United for Separation of Church and State		Girl Scouts of the USA
Amyloidosis Foundation		Girls Inc.
Annie E. Casey Foundation		Global Integrity
Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center		Goodwill Industries, International
		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 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 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
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Center for Fire and Life Safety
National Committee for Responsive
Philanthropy
National Council of Behavioral Health
National Council of Churches
National Council of Nonprofits
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 Commonwealth Fund
The Dibble Institute
The Educational Foundation of America
The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi
The Michael J. Fox Foundation
The Ocean Foundation
The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation
The Voter Participation Center
TIDES
Unemployment Services Trust
Union for Reform Judaism
United Way Worldwide
University Professional & Continuing
Education Association
US Lacrosse
Vasculitis Foundation
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