

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Ann Wagner
435 Cannon House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Wagner:

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
Southeast Missouri Food Bank Sikeston
Southtown Council Kansas City
Special Olympics Missouri Lee's Summit
St. Louis Area Foodbank Bridgeton
St. Teresa's Academy Kansas City
Synergy Group Wentzville
The Edgar Snow Memorial Foundation Kansas City
The Hope Center KC Kansas City
The South Cabin Group LLC Wildwood
Turn the Page KC Kansas City
Vasculitis Foundation Kansas City
VisionServe Alliance St. Louis
Wentzville School Foundation
Women's Employment Network Kansas City
Women's Foundation of Greater St. Louis St. Louis
Wright Care Dentistry

National Organizations

Abila
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
AdoptAClassroom.org
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
American Alliance of Museums
American Association of Anatomists
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Association of Teachers of German
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
Annie E. Casey Foundation
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
Ecology Project International
Engineering Conferences International
Feed the Children
Feeding America
Food & Water Watch
Ford Foundation
Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers
Free Press
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
Global Integrity
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