

# Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Jon Tester  
311 Hart Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Tester:

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,

9 Energies Center	Bozeman	Gallatin Valley Land Trust	
A Carousel for Missoula	Missoula	Garden City Harvest	Missoula
Adult Resource Alliance	Billings	Glacier County Regional Port Authority	Cut Bank
AERO		Glacier National Park Conservancy	Columbia Falls
Alliance for Youth		Habitat for Humanity of Ravalli County	Hamilton
Anaconda Community Foundation	Anaconda	HAVEN	Bozeman
Art Spot	Malta	Helena Area Community Foundation	Helena
ASPEN	Livingston	Helena Food Share	Helena
B.E.A.R. (Bitterroot Ecological Awareness Resources)	Hamilton	Home ReSource	Missoula
Bear Paw Development Corporation	Havre	Homeword	Missoula
Beartooth Recreational Trails Association	Red Lodge	Human Science Institute	Helena
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Gallatin County	Bozeman	Intermountain	Helena
Big Sky Youth Empowerment	Bozeman	Intermountain Opera Association of Bozeman	Bozeman
Bike Walk Montana	Helena	Janna Lundquist Consulting	
Bitterroot Collective Impact	Corvallis	Jeannette Rankin Peace Center	Missoula
Bozeman Public Library Foundation	Bozeman	Kootenai Heritage Council	Libby
Bridgercare	Bozeman	Laurel American Legion Post 123	Laurel
Career Futures, Inc.	Butte	Laurel Senior Citizens Center	Laurel
Career Transitions, Inc.	Belgrade	Leadership Montana	Bozeman
Chany Reon Ockert Consulting LLC	Bigfork	Living Art of Montana	Missoula
ChildWise Institute	Helena	M+R - Montana Office	Missoula
Citizens for a Better Flathead	Kalispell	Marion Finley Friendship House	Kalispell
DEAP	Miles City	Missoula Aging Services	Missoula
District 4 Human Resources Development Council	Havre	Missoula Art Museum	Missoula
Domestic and Sexual Violence Services of Carbon County	Red Lodge	Missoula Community Foundation	
Easter Seals-Goodwill Northern Rocky Mountain	Great Falls	Missoula Interfaith Collaborative	Missoula
Eastern Montana CASA GAL Inc.	Miles City	Missoula Manor Homes	Missoula
Eastern Montana Industries	miles city	Missoula Writing Collaborative	Missoula
Ecology Project International	Missoula	Montana Association of Land Trusts	Helena
Emerson Center for the Arts & Culture	Bozeman	Montana Association of Symphonies	
ExplorationWorks Science Center	Helena	Montana Audubon	Helena
Family Promise of Great Falls	Great Falls	Montana Community Foundation, Inc.	Helena
Family Service	Billings	Montana Conservation Corps	Bozeman
Five Valleys Audubon Society	Missoula	Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities	Helena
Florence Crittenton Home and Services	Helena	Montana Innocence Project	Missoula
Foundation for Community Care of Richland County	Sidney	Montana Law Enforcement Museum	Philipsburg
Fox Hollow Animal Project		Montana Nonprofit Association	Helena
Gallatin County Love Inc.	Bozeman	Montana Oral Health Foundation	
		Montana Outdoor Science School	Bozeman
		Montana Outfitters and Guides Association	Montana City
		Montana Shares	Helena

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Montana

Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation	Columbia Falls	United Way of Yellowstone County	Billings
Myrna Loy Center for Performing and Media Arts	Helena	Upper Swan Valley Historical Society, Inc.	Condon
Nate Chute Foundation	Kalispell	Verge Theater	Bozeman
National Center for Appropriate Technology	Butte	Warriors and Quiet Waters Foundation	Bozeman
NeighborWorks Montana	Helena	WaterWorks Art Museum	
North Central Area Agency on Aging		West Mont	Helena
North Lake County Library Foundation Board	Polson	West NW Consulting	
North Valley Hospital Foundation	Whitefish	Whitefish Community Foundation	Whitefish
O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation, Inc.	Red Lodge	Wild Rockies Field Institute	Missoula
Oneness Project		Windhorse Equine Learning	Bozeman
Opportunity Resources Inc.	Missoula	Women's Opportunity & Resource Development (WORD)	Missoula
Orphan Girl Children's Theatre	Cardwell	Women's Voices for the Earth	
Partners Ensuring Equal Rights and Supports (PEERS)	Helena	Yellowstone Ecological Research Center	Bozeman
Peace Place	Great Falls	Yellowstone Wildlife Sanctuary	Red Lodge
Prickly Pear Land Trust	Helena	Youth Connections	Helena
Project Hope	Columbus	Youth Homes, Inc.	Helena
Project Hope of Columbus PWF	Columbus	YWCA Great Falls	Great Falls
Ravalli County Museum	Hamilton	YWCA of Missoula	Missoula
Reach, Inc.	Bozeman		
Red Lodge Area Community Foundation	Red Lodge		
Rural Dynamics, Inc.	Great Falls		
SAFE Harbor Inc.	Ronan		
Sage Solutions Nonprofit Consulting, LLC	Bozeman		
Smith River Habitat Project	Clancy		
Snowy Mountain Development Corporation	Lewistown		
Special K Ranch, Inc.	Columbus		
Special Olympics Montana	Great Falls		
St. John's Lutheran Ministries	Billings		
Sunburst Community Service Foundation	Eureka		
Swan View Coalition	Kalispell		
Sweet Pea, A Festival of the Arts	Bozeman		
Tamarack Grief Resource Center			
The Clay Studio of Missoula	Missoula		
The Flagship Program, Western Montana Mental Health Center	Missoula		
The Montana Actors' Theatre	Havre		
The Montana Racial Equity Project	Bozeman		
The Nurturing Center	Kalispell		
The Traveling School	Bozeman		
The University of Montana Western Foundation	Dillon		
The Vital Ground Foundation	Missoula		
United Way of Beaverhead County	Dillon		

## 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

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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