

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Brad R. Wenstrup
2419 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Wenstrup:

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,

Ohio Organizations

Action for Children	Columbus	Havar, Inc.	Athens
Affecting Community Transformation d/b/a Oasis House	Dayton	Homeport	Columbus
Aikey Foundation, Inc.	Wellington	House of New Hope	Saint Louisville
Akron Community Foundation	Akron	Housing Research & Advocacy Center	Cleveland
Arthur Morgan Institute for Community Solutions	Yellow Springs	Humility of Mary Housing Jarvis Gibson Foundation	
Bethany House Services	Cincinnati	Kendal at Granville	Granville
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Shelby & Darke County	Sidney	Lake Erie Swimming LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland	
Business for Peace Community Development Foundation (B4P CODEFOUND)	Blacklick	LifeSpan	Hamilton
Circle of Peace International	Marietta	Mobile Meals of Toledo, Inc.	Toledo
City Year Columbus	Columbus	Morino Ventures, LLC	Rocky River
Cleveland Zoological Society	Cleveland	Multifaith Campus Alliance of the Miami Valley	Dayton
Cogswell Hall, Inc.	Cleveland	Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Cleveland	Cleveland
Columbus School for Girls	Columbus	Newark-Granville Symphony Orchestra	Newark
Community Foundation of Lorain County	Elyria	Non Profit Evolution	Columbus
Community Kitchen	Columbus	Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies	Columbus
Corporation for Findlay Market	Cincinnati	Ohio Association of Foodbanks	Columbus
Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development		Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations - OANO	Columbus
Dayton Foundation	Dayton	Ohio CDC Association	
Disability Foundation, Inc.	Dayton	Ohio Domestic Violence Network	Columbus
Dobama Theatre	Cleveland Heights	Ohio Environmental Council	Columbus
Dublin Arts Council	Dublin	Ohio League For Nursing	North
E&L Company	Youngstown		Olmsted
Early Childhood Resource Center	Canton	Ohio Valley Recovery Incorporated	Bridgeport
Easterseals Serving Greater Cincinnati	Cincinnati	Perry County Soccer League	Crooksville
Edheads	Hilliard	Philanthropy Ohio	Columbus
Far West Center	Westlake	Preferred Properties, Inc.	Toledo
Fieldstone Farm Therapeutic Riding Center	Chagrin Falls	Prevent Blindness, Ohio Affiliate	
Franciscan Earth Literacy Center	Tiffin	Seeds of Hope	
Friends of the Cultural Arts Center	Columbus	Sisters of St. Francis	Tiffin
Glaciy Theatre Collective		Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth	Delphos
Goodwill Columbus	Columbus	St. Francis Spirituality Center	Tiffin
Green Hills Community	West Liberty	Stonewall Columbus	Columbus
Habitat for Humanity, Mid-Ohio	Columbus	The Central Ohio Symphony	Delaware
Hannah's Treasure Chest	Centerville	The Community Foundation for Crawford County	Bucyrus
Harmony Project	Columbus		

The Dakota Center	Dayton	Americans United for Separation of Church and State
The Gathering Place	Beachwood	Amyloidosis Foundation
The Problem Gambling Network of Ohio	Columbus	Annie E. Casey Foundation
The Sindisa Fund	Hillsboro	Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
The UpTown Association, Inc.	Toledo	Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
Toledo Ballet	Toledo	Association of American Colleges and Universities
Toledo Community Foundation	Toledo	Association of Art Museum Directors
United Disability Services	Akron	Association of Direct Response Fundraising Counsel
United Way of Gallia County	Gallipolis	Association of Fundraising Professionals
United Way of Greater Cleveland	Cleveland	Association of Immunization Managers
United Way of Medina County	Medina	Association of Nature Center Administrators
United Way of Summit County	Akron	Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
United Way of Williams County	Bryan	Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio	Columbus	Baptist Women in Ministry
VSA Ohio	Columbus	Barr Foundation
Wharton Institute for the Performing Arts	Berkeley Heights	BoardSource
WomenSafe	Chardon	Brady Campaign and Center to Prevent Gun Violence
YWCA Alliance	Alliance	Camp Fire
YWCA Dayton		Campion Foundation
YWCA Greater Cincinnati	Cincinnati	Catholic Charities USA
YWCA of Hamilton, OH	West Chester	Catholic Mobilizing Network
YWCA Warren	Warren	Center for Health, Environment & Justice

National Organizations

Abila		Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.		Citizen Schools
AdoptAClassroom.org		CleanSlateNow
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities		Commonwealth Fund
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation		Council on Foundations
American Alliance of Museums		Council for Global Equality
American Association of Anatomists		Dance USA
American Association of Physics Teachers		Dementia Society, Inc.
American Association of Teachers of German		Democracy 21
American Bladder Cancer Society		Destination & Travel Foundation
American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine		Dietel Partners, LLC
American Brass Chamber Music Association		Disability Rights Advocacy Fund
American Conference of Academic Deans		Ecology Project International
American Heart Association		Engineering Conferences International
American Historical Association		Feed the Children
American Jewish Committee		Feeding America
American Medical Association Foundation		Food & Water Watch
American Physiological Society		Ford Foundation
American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.		Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers
American Red Cross		Free Press
Americans for the Arts		Girl Scouts of the USA
Americans Promoting Study Abroad		Girls Inc.
		Global Integrity
		Goodwill Industries, International

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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