

# Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Jeff A. Merkley  
313 Hart Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Merkley:

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.

April 5, 2017

Page 2

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,

**Oregon Organizations**

Alano Club of Portland	Portland	La Pine Community Kitchen	La Pine
Alisa Blum & Associates		Lake County Resources Initiative	Lakeview
Anne E. Denecke, PC		Laudato si' USA	Portland
Birthingway College of Midwifery	Portland	Lewis & Clark Montessori Charter School	
Breast Friends, Oregon		Main Street Mosier	Mosier
CASA of Oregon	Sherwood	MCTF	Vida
Cascades Raptor Center	Eugene	Meals on Wheels People	Portland
Cat Adoption Team		Meyer Memorial Trust	Portland
Chinquapin Center for the Arts	Grants Pass	Molalla Warming Center	Molalla
Coalition Advocating for Animals	Salem	Mosaic Consulting	Portland
Coastal Celtic Society	Coos Bay	Mother Teresa Home dba Magdalene Home	Medford
Cogeo	Portland	Mysten Shenker, CPA	Portland
College Dreams	Grants Pass	National Indian Child Welfare Association	Portland
Columbia Pacific Food Bank	Saint Helens	Nonprofit Association of Oregon	Portland
Community Housing Fund	Beaverton	Northwest College of the Liberal Arts	Portland
Cornerstone Community Housing	Eugene	Northwest Pilot Project, Inc.	Portland
Cottage Theatre	Cottage Grove	ONABEN	Portland
Creswell at Home, Inc.	Creswell	Oregon Food Bank	Portland
Delgani String Quartet	Eugene	OregonASK	Wilsonville
Donate Life Northwest	Portland	ORI Community and Evaluation Services	Eugene
Eastco Diversified Services, Inc.	Gresham	People for Parks Oregon	Portland
ECA	Portland	Phoenix Finance	Portland
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon	Portland	Phoenix Rising Transitions	Gresham
F.I.N.F.I.D. International Foundation	Portland	Raziah Roushan, Inc.	Beaverton
Facilitation & Process, LLC	Portland	Renewable Northwest	Portland
Four Rivers Health Care	Ontario	Returning Veterans Project	
Friendly House	Portland	Rogue Valley Chorale Association	Rogue River
Friends Of South Slough	Coos Bay	Rogue Valley Youth Choruses	
Friends of the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge	Sherwood	ROSE Community Development	Portland
Friends of the West Slope Library	Portland	Shangri La Corporation	Salem
Fritz Consulting	Bend	Silverton Together, Inc.	Silverton
Give Voice		Society for Syncopated Drumming	Portland
Go To Help, LLC	Portland	Sojourner Education Foundation	Milwaukie
Grantmakers of Oregon and Southwest Washington		Southern Oregon Child and Family Council	Central Point
Grants Pass Museum of Art	Grants Pass	SPOON	Portland
Grounded Solutions Network		St. Vincent de Paul Society	Eugene
Health Care for All-Oregon	Portland	Tanker 61 Memorial	
Heart of Oregon Corps	Bend	The Ford Family Foundation	Roseburg
In This Together	Troutdale	The Learning Commons	Portland
Itching to Help! LLC			
Jayne Cravens, Consultant	Forest Grove		

The Museum At Warm Springs  
 THSC  
 Tom McCall Legacy Project                      Milwaukie  
 Transition Projects                                      Portland  
 United Way of Columbia County                      Rainier  
 Vernonia Hands on Art Center                      Vernonia  
 Wellsprings Friends School                      Eugene  
 Western Arts Alliance                                      Portland  
 Willamette Resources and  
     Educational Network                                      Eugene  
 Yamhill CDC d/b/a Community                      McMinnville  
     Home  
 Yamhill Community Action                      McMinnville  
     Partnership Food Bank

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  
 Champion 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

**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

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