

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Lloyd K. Smucker
516 Cannon House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Smucker:

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,

Pennsylvania Organizations

A Woman's Concern	Lancaster	Energize, Inc.	Philadelphia
ACLAMO Family Centers	Norristown	Family Promise of Lyco County	Williamsport
Acquired Brain Injury Network of Pennsylvania	Lansdale	Family Service Association of Northeastern Pennsylvania	Wilkes-Barre
AFP-Greater Philadelphia Chapter	Philadelphia	Family Service of Chester County	West Chester
Allegheny County Library Association	Pittsburgh	Family Services of Western PA	Pittsburgh
American Insight	Philadelphia	Fishes & Loaves Cooperative Ministries	Pittsburgh
Army Heritage Center Foundation	Carlisle	Frankford Community Development Corporation	Philadelphia
Auberle	McKeesport	Free Library of Philadelphia	Philadelphia
Aurora Philanthropic Consulting, LLC	King of Prussia	Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation	Philadelphia
Beacon Clinic for Health and Hope	Harrisburg	Friends Fiduciary Corporation	Philadelphia
Berks County Community Foundation	Reading	Friends of SummerSounds	Greensburg
Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center	Allentown	Genuardi Family Foundation	Blue Bell
Breast Cancer Support Services of Berks	West Reading	Georgia E. Gregory Interdenominational School of Music	Philadelphia
Butler YWCA	Butler	Glen Foerd Conservation Corporation	Philadelphia
Camp Koala	Kingston	Global Connections	
Center for Literacy, World Affairs Council	Philadelphia	Global Links	Pittsburgh
Central Pennsylvania Food Bank		Greater Erie Area Habitat for Humanity	Erie
Christian Youth Fellowship, Inc.	Pittsburgh	Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank	Duquesne
Colcom Foundation	Pittsburgh	Habitat for Humanity of Bucks County	Chalfont
COMMON Education Foundation		Habitat for Humanity of Chester County	Coatesville
Commonwealth Youth Choirs	Philadelphia	Habitat for Humanity of Greater Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh
Communities In Schools of the Lehigh Valley	Breinigsville	Habitat for Humanity of Montgomery County, PA	
Coro Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	Habitat for Humanity of the Greater Harrisburg Area	Harrisburg
Cotlar and Cotlar	Doylestown	Harbor Compliance	
Dementia Society, Inc.	Doylestown	Historic Sugartown, Inc.	Malvern
DePaul School for Hearing and Speech	Pittsburgh	Impact100 Philadelphia	Haverford
Development Consultants	Philadelphia	InfoRich Group, Inc.	Drexel Hill
Dignity Housing		Inglis	Philadelphia
Diversity in Action		Inter-Mission	Narberth
Donald and Sylvia Robinson Family Foundation	Pittsburgh	International Performing Arts for Youth	Philadelphia
Don't Stop Dreamin'	Butler		
Elayne Howard & Associates.com			

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Pennsylvania

Jewish Community Foundation of Central PA	Harrisburg	Richard Erstad Consulting	Ardmore
Junior League of the Lehigh Valley	Center Valley	Roots Tribe Yoga	Philadelphia
KenCrest	Blue Bell	Rosenlund Family Foundation	
Kennett Area Senior Center	Kennett Square	Schuylkill Women in Crisis	Pottsville
Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America	Sharpsburg	SeeChange Consulting	Philadelphia
Kutztown Community Partnership	Kutztown	Sisters of Mercy	Pittsburgh
Lancaster County Community Foundation	Lancaster	Society of the Holy Child Jesus, American Province	
Lancaster Farmland Trust	Strasburg	SpiriTrust Lutheran Home Care & Hospice	Chambersburg
Laurel Foundation	Pittsburgh	Strategy Solutions	Erie
Lawrence County Habitat for Humanity		Tabor Community Services	Lancaster
Leadership Centre County	State College	TeamChildren	Audubon
Leadership York	York	The Bodhana Group	Ephrata
Lodge Life Services, Inc.	Lancaster	The Burd Group	
Lycoming County Health Improvement Coalition	Williamsport	The Children's Museum	Bloomsburg
Melanie Dante, Consultant		The Conococheague Institute for the Study of Cultural Heritage	Mercersburg
Montgomery Early Learning Centers	Narberth	The Dietrich W. Botstiber Foundation	Media
Moravian Open Door, Inc.		The HBE Foundation	Bryn Mawr
Musicopia	Philadelphia	The Lectionary Company	Philadelphia
National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors	Columbia	The Luzerne Foundation	Wilkes-Barre
National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation	Pennsylvania	The Merchants Fund	Philadelphia
Nazareth Housing Services	Pittsburgh	The University of the Arts	Philadelphia
New Castle Community Y	New Castle	The Untours Foundation	Media
Northland Public Library Foundation	Wexford	Tri-County Patriots for Independent Living	Washington
Opportunity Fund	Pittsburgh	United Way of Adams County	Gettysburg
PA Campus Compact		United Way of Beaver County	Monaca
Pearl S. Buck International	Perkasie	United Way of Blair County	Altoona
Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations	Harrisburg	United Way of Butler County	Butler
Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light	State College	United Way of Erie County	Erie
Pennsylvania Lumber Museum Associates	Ulysses	United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties	Scranton
Philly Fellows	Philadelphia	United Way of Lancaster County	Lancaster
Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens	Pittsburgh	United Way of Mifflin-Juniata	Lewistown
Phoenixville Area Community Services	Phoenixville	United Way of Pennsylvania	
Pinebrook Family Answers	Allentown	United Way of York County, PA	York
Pleasantville United Church of Christ	Chalfont	Valerie M. Jones Associates	Media
Plum Senior Community Center	Plum	Waverly Community House	Waverly
Praise Consulting	Langhorne	Women for Sobriety	
Recycle Bicycle Harrisburg	Carlisle	Women's Resource Center	Wayne
Renew Theaters, Inc.	Doylestown	WOMEN'S WAY	Philadelphia
		YWCA Bradford	Bradford
		YWCA Northcentral PA	Williamsport
		YWCA Tri-County Area	Pottstown

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