

# Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Ryan A. Costello  
326 Cannon House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Costello:

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