

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
290 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Graham:

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,

South Carolina Organizations			
1000 Feathers, LLC	Cayce	Georgetown SC Habitat for Humanity	Pawleys Island
A Child's Haven	Greenville	Girls on the Run	Charleston
Adult Enrichment Centers		Gravatt Camp and Conference Center	Aiken
AID Upstate	Greenville	Greenville Family Partnership	Greenville
Alliance For Full Acceptance	Charleston	Greenville Literacy Association	Greenville
Alston Wilkes Society		Greenwood County Community Foundation	Greenwood
Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired	Charleston	Greer Relief & Resources Agency, Inc.	Greer
Bellwether Non-Profit Advisors	Simpsonville	Habitat for Humanity Georgetown County	Georgetown
Black River United Way	Georgetown	Habitat for Humanity Greenville SC	Greenville
Callie and John Rainey Foundation	Anderson	Helping Hands of Georgetown	Georgetown
Carolina Business Equipment	Columbia	Home Works of America	Columbia
Carolina Human Reinvestment		Hope Remains Youth Ranch	Wellford
Catherine Jones Consulting		Increasing H.O.P.E Financial Training Center	North Charleston
ccbozard consulting	Columbia	Institute for Practical Theology	Columbia
Central Carolina Community Foundation	Columbia	International Primate Protection League	Summerville
Centre Stage-SC!	Greenville	Justice 360	Columbia
Charleston Stands	Charleston	Kingdom Kids Foundation	
Child Abuse Prevention Association	Port Royal	Lancaster County Council of the Arts	Lancaster
Children's Attention Home	Rock Hill	Lowcountry Food Bank	Charleston
Children's Museum of the Lowcountry	Charleston	Lowcountry Local First	Charleston
Children's Recovery Center	Georgetown	Martha W. Daniels Foundation	Camden
Church Street Historic Foundation	Camden	Miracle Hill Ministries	Greenville
Clemmons Thomas Consulting, LLC	Saint Stephen	NAMI Lowcountry	Hilton Head Island
Clover Area Assistance Center	Clover	National Royal Miss	Little River
Coastal Conservation League	Charleston	Neighbor to Neighbor of South Carolina	
Columbia Children's Theatre	Columbia	New Morning Foundation	Columbia
Columbia World Affairs Council	Columbia	North Charleston Pops!	North Charleston
Community Foundation of Greenville	Greenville	Pregnancy Center and Clinic of the Lowcountry	Hilton Head Island
Craig Farm Historic Preservation Society	Lancaster	Reid Lehman Consulting	Greenville
Dorchester Children's Center	Summerville	Second Helpings LC	Hilton Head Island
Eat Smart Move More SC	Columbia	South Carolina Afterschool Alliance	Columbia
Eau Claire Cooperative Health Center	Columbia		
Florence County Disabilities Foundation	Lake City		

South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center	Columbia	Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development	Charleston	American Alliance of Museums
South Carolina Cancer Alliance	Columbia	American Association of Anatomists
South Carolina Christian Action Council	Columbia	American Association of Physics Teachers
South Carolina HIV/AIDS Council	Columbia	American Association of Teachers of German
St. Luke's Free Medical Clinic	Spartanburg	American Bladder Cancer Society
Still Hopes	West Columbia	American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine
Susan G. Komen Lowcountry	Charleston	American Brass Chamber Music Association
The Arc of South Carolina	Cayce	American Conference of Academic Deans
The Dream Center of Pickens County, Inc.	Easley	American Heart Association
The Early Learning Partnership of York County	Rock Hill	American Historical Association
The Gambrill Foundation	Anderson	American Jewish Committee
The Heart2Heart Foundation, Inc.	Rock Hill	American Medical Association Foundation
The Springs Close Foundation	Fort Mill	American Physiological Society
The Stringer Foundation	Anderson	American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.
The Upton Trio	Camden	American Red Cross
The Warehouse Theatre	Greenville	Americans for the Arts
The Weathers Group	Columbia	Americans Promoting Study Abroad
The Wellness Council for SC	Myrtle Beach	Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Together SC	Columbia	Amyloidosis Foundation
Trio Solutions Inc.	Mount Pleasant	Annie E. Casey Foundation
United Christian Ministries	Easley	Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
United Way Association of South Carolina	Columbia	Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
United Way of Greenville County	Greenville	Association of American Colleges and Universities
United Way of Oconee County, Inc.	Seneca	Association of Art Museum Directors
United Way of Sumter, Clarendon & Lee Counties	Sumter	Association of Direct Response Fundraising Counsel
United Way of the Midlands	Columbia	Association of Fundraising Professionals
Upstate SC Chapter of Americans United	Spartanburg	Association of Immunization Managers
Windwood Farm Home for Children, Inc.		Association of Nature Center Administrators
Women's Rights and Empowerment Network	Columbia	Astraea Lesbian Foundation for 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
	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

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South Carolina

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