

# Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Beto O'Rourke  
1330 Longworth House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative O'Rourke:

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,

**Texas Organizations**

		Fort Worth Area Habitat for Humanity, Inc.	Fort Worth
Abbe & Associates: Fundraising and Nonprofit Consultants	Arlington	Foundation Communities	Austin
Abell Photography		Girl Scouts of Central Texas	Austin
Abila	Austin	Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas	Dallas
All Blind Children of Texas	Austin	Granny's Place Ministries	Duncanville
Alley Theatre	Houston	GrantBook	
Amarillo Habitat for Humanity	Amarillo	Guardian Angels for Solder's Pet	
American Heart Association	Dallas	Habitat for Humanity Denton County	Denton
Americans United for Separation of Church & State - San Antonio, TX Chapter	San Antonio	Habitat for Humanity of Grayson County	Sherman
Americans United for Separation of Church and State - Houston chapter	Houston	Habitat for Humanity of Greater Garland	Garland
Appamada	Austin	Habitat for Humanity of San Angelo	San Angelo
Arts Council of Midland	Midland	Habitat for Humanity of Smith County	Tyler
Associated Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors of Texas, Inc.	Buda	Habitat for Humanity, Williamson County	Round Rock
Austin Habitat for Humanity	Austin	Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas	San Antonio
Bay Area Turning Point, Inc.		House of Hope, Inc.	Glenn Heights
BEST of Texas Robotics	Plano	Houston Children Give Back	Houston
Bexar County Opportunities Industrialization Center, Inc.	San Antonio	Houston Habitat for Humanity	
Big Medium	Austin	IT'S TIME TEXAS	Austin
Brazos Bend Guardianship Services	Rosenberg	Join Us For Justice, the El Paso Chapter of Americans United	El Paso
Caritas of Austin	Austin	Journal of the History of Ideas, Inc.	College Station
Chavisjah Supportive Services	Missouri City	Latinitas	Austin and El Paso
Children Helpers Foundations	Cape Coast	Launch Pad Job Club	Austin
Christian Women's Job Corps of El Paso		LevelUp Institute	Austin
Community Integrated Employment	Addison	Lions Club International	Bellmead
Congregation Agudas Achim	Austin	Live Theatre League of Tarrant County	Fort Worth
Cultivating Leaders Achieving Scholastic Success	Fort Worth	Longview Habitat for Humanity Inc.	Longview
Dallas Parks Foundation	Dallas	Madeleine Crouch & Co., Inc.	Dallas
El Buen Samaritano Episcopal Mission	Austin	Midland Habitat for Humanity	Midland
Equity for Women in the Church, Inc.	Dallas	Mission Granbury Inc.	
For the Children, Inc., d/b/a Arts & Entertainment 4 DFW Youths	Plano	North Collin County Habitat for Humanity	McKinney
Fort Bend Habitat for Humanity	Stafford	Pasadena Habitat for Humanity	Pasadena
Fort Hood Area Habitat for Humanity	Killeen	Peace of Christ Church	Round Rock

RBWI	Brownsville	American Board of Venous & Lymphatic
REACH	Dallas	Medicine
Resource Center	Dallas	American Brass Chamber Music Association
San Antonio Lighthouse For The Blind	San Antonio	American Conference of Academic Deans
Sewa International	Houston	American Heart Association
Sexual Assault Resource Center	Bryan	American Historical Association
Social Velocity	Austin	American Jewish Committee
South Main Baptist Church, Houston	Houston	American Medical Association Foundation
South Texas Literacy Coalition	Edinburg	American Physiological Society
Standish Foundation for Child & Family Centered Healthcare	Austin	American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.
State of Texas Alliance for Recycling		American Red Cross
Swan Songs	Austin	Americans for the Arts
Taps 'n Tunes Productions Inc.	Hurst	Americans Promoting Study Abroad
Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations	Houston	Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Texas Baptists Committed	Allen	Amyloidosis Foundation
Texas One Voice d/b/a One Voice Texas	Houston	Annie E. Casey Foundation
Texoma Health Foundation	Denison	Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
The Arc of Fort Bend County	Sugar Land	Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
The Baby Stewart Foundation		Association of American Colleges and Universities
The Fallen Linemen Organization		Association of Art Museum Directors
Thousands Watching	Houston	Association of Direct Response Fundraising Counsel
Trinity Center	Austin	Association of Fundraising Professionals
United Way of Greater Baytown Area & Chambers County	Baytown	Association of Immunization Managers
United Way of Greater Houston	Houston	Association of Nature Center Administrators
United Way of Mid & South Jefferson County	Port Arthur	Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
Vision Weavers Consulting, LLC	Humble	Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Vistage Group 3627	Houston	Baptist Women in Ministry
Volunteers of America Texas	Arlington	Barr Foundation
Waco Habitat for Humanity	Waco	BoardSource
Young Women's Christian Association of San Antonio, TX	San Antonio	Brady Campaign and Center to Prevent Gun Violence
YWCA of Lubbock	Lubbock	Camp Fire

**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
	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

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**Texas**

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