

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Ted Poe
2132 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Poe:

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

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|---|---------------|--|--------------------|
| | | 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 |

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| 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

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| 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