

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Adam Smith
2264 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Adam Smith:

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,

Washington Organizations

501 Commons	Seattle	HomeFront Therapies	
Account for Your Health	Everett	Homes First	Olympia
ACS - Washington	Federal Way	Homeward Pet Adoption Center	
Advancement Consulting	Tacoma	HopeWorks Social Enterprises	Everett
AMIGAS DE CORAZON	Spokane	Inland Northwest Nonprofit Consulting	
Backbone Campaign	Vashon	Intermountain Impact Investments	Walla Walla
Bainbridge Chorale	Bainbridge Island	International Community Health Services	
Birch Consulting	Vancouver	Job Carr Cabin Museum	Tacoma
Blue Mountain Humane Society	Walla Walla	Josephine Caring Community in Stanwood WA	Mount Vernon
Brigid Collins Family Support Center	Bellingham	Key Peninsula Community Services	
Bullitt Foundation	Seattle	Kirkpatrick Family Foundation	Seattle
Campion Foundation	Seattle	Kittitas County Habitat for Humanity	Ellensburg
Cedarmere Foundation	Seattle	KMRE Community Radio	Bellingham
Center for Justice	Spokane	Knitting Humanity Together	Kent
Child Care Aware of WA	Tacoma	Kulshan Community Land Trust	Bellingham
CIS		Laura Pierce Consulting	Seattle
Clallam Mosaic	Port Angeles	League of Women Voters of Washington	Seattle
COMIA Foundation	Cheney	Leahy Consulting	Sammamish
Danza Classica Ballet Foundation	Walla Walla	Legal Voice	Seattle
Faith Action Network	Seattle	Lewis County Literacy Council	Centralia
Flight Club Foundation	Auburn	Master Gardener Foundation of Benton Franklin County	Richland
Forest and Sequoia Foundations	Tacoma	Meade B Thayer LLC	Seattle
Foundation for Healthy Generations	Seattle	Mount Vernon Downtown Association	Mount Vernon
Freedom Project	Kirkland	NAMI Washington	Seattle
FUND MOMENTUM, LLC	Seattle	Native Arts and Cultures Foundation	
Furry Friends	Vancouver	Nature 4 All	Maple Valley
Grace Baptist Church	University Place	Nexus Youth and Families	Auburn
Granite Falls Community Coalition Food Bank	Granite Falls	Nonprofit Performance Partners, LLC	
Greater Gig Harbor Foundation	Gig Harbor	North Cascades Conservation Council	
Habitat for Humanity - Colville Valley Partners	Colville	Northwest Children's Fund NPO	Kirkland
Habitat for Humanity of Washington State	Tacoma	NW Children's Fund	Seattle
Habitat for Humanity - Spokane	Spokane	One Equal Heart Foundation	Seattle
Health and Hope Medical Outreach	Centralia		
Healthy Youth Alliance			
Heartlinks Hospice & Palliative Care	Sunnyside		

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Orcas Island Community Foundation	Eastsound	The Successful Transition and Reentry (STAR) Project	Walla Walla
Orting Food Bank	Orting	Treehouse	Seattle
Our Literacy Council of Lewis County	Centralia	Turning Pointe Domestic Violence Services	Shelton
Philanthropy Northwest	Seattle	USA Softball of Washington State	Vancouver
Phoenix Conservancy	Pullman	Valley Community Center	Clarkston
Powerful Voices		Vision for Independence Center	
Pride Foundation	Seattle	Waitsburg Historical Society	Waitsburg
Psychotherapy Cooperative	Seattle	Walla Walla YWCA	
Race to Remember	Vancouver	Washington Apple Education Foundation	Wenatchee
Rebuilding Together South Sound	Tacoma	Washington Nonprofits	Seattle
Sahsen Foundation		Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility	Seattle
Satterberg Foundation	Seattle	Washington State Nurses Foundation	
Schools for Salone		Washington Statewide Capacity Collaborative	
Scout Finch Consulting	Seattle	Wenatchee Valley Humane Society	Wenatchee
Seattle Arts & Lectures	Seattle	Whatcom Community Foundation	Bellingham
Seattle Foundation	Seattle	WhiteRock Consulting Group	Pullman
Seattle Works	Seattle	Whitman County Humane Society	Pullman
Shelter Bay Chorus	La Conner	YWCA Clark County	Vancouver
Sherwood Trust	Walla Walla	YWCA of Spokane	Spokane
Skagit Community Foundation	Mount Vernon	YWCA Olympia	Olympia
Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group	Mount Vernon	YWCA Seattle King Snohomish	
Skagit Habitat for Humanity	Mount Vernon		
Sno-Valley Senior Center	Carnation		
Society of St. Vincent de Paul	University Place		
Sound Generations	Seattle		
Southwest Spokane County Historical Society	Cheney		
Southwest Youth and Family Services	Seattle		
Spokane Area Jewish Family Services	Spokane		
Spokane Sports Commission			
Support Services for the Developmentally Disabled			
Temple Beth Am	Seattle		
Terrain Programs	Spokane		
The Boiler Room	Port Townsend		
The Museum of Flight	Seattle		
The Mustard Seed Project of Key Peninsula	Vaughn		
The Olympic Beacon Group	Copalis Crossing		
The Peg and Rick Young Foundation	Seattle		
The Russell Family Foundation	Gig Harbor		

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

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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