

# Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Sean Duffy  
2330 Rayburn House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Duffy:

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,

### Wisconsin Organizations

		Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council	Milwaukee
Advocates of Ozaukee	Sauville	Milwaukee Center for Children and Youth, Inc.	Milwaukee
ArtWorks for Milwaukee	Milwaukee	Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity	Milwaukee
Association for Pelvic Organ Prolapse Support	Mukwonago	Milwaukee Public Theatre	Milwaukee
AVK Education, Inc.	Glendale	Moose International	Mukwonago
Brookhill Institute of Mathematics	Waukesha	Muskego Senior Taxi	Muskego
Burleigh Street Community Development, Inc.	Milwaukee	Nativity Jesuit Academy	Milwaukee
Center for Media and Democracy		Natural Heritage Land Trust, Inc.	Madison
Center for Veterans Issues, Ltd.	Milwaukee	Neighborhood House of Milwaukee	Milwaukee
Chippewa Area Mentor Program	Chippewa Falls	NeighborWorks Blackhawk Region	Beloit
Chippewa Valley Museum	Eau Claire	Nonprofit Center of Milwaukee	Milwaukee
Chippewa Valley Transit Alliance	Eau Claire	North Country Independent Living	superior
CommonGround Ministry, Inc.		Optimist Theatre	Milwaukee
Comunidad	Whitefish Bay	Pathfinders Milwaukee, Inc.	Milwaukee
COPE Services	Grafton	Penfield Children's Center	Milwaukee
Covey	Allenton	Project Concern	St. Francis
Cudahy-St. Francis Interfaith		Project Concern of Cudahy-St. Francis	Cudahy
Diefenbach Communications Strategies	Milwaukee	Racine Community Foundation	Racine
Diverse and Resilient	Milwaukee	Rare & Undiagnosed Network	Delafield
Dominican Center		River Falls Community Food Pantry	River Falls
Door County Land Trust	Mequon	Royal Academy of Dance	Milwaukee
Easterseals Southeast Wisconsin	West Allis	Savage Support Corp	Milwaukee
Ebenezer Child Care Centers, Inc.	Milwaukee	Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin	Madison
ERAs Senior Network, Inc.	Waukesha	Skylight Music Theatre	Milwaukee
Ex Fabula	Milwaukee	Spectrum Nonprofit Services	Milwaukee
Feeding Wisconsin	Madison	Spotted Eagle, Inc.	Milwaukee
Fortunate Futures	Milwaukee	Stepping Stones of Dunn County	Menomonie
Forward Community Investments	Madison	The Addiction Resource Council, Inc.	Waukesha
Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc.	Madison	The Center: 7 Rivers LGBTQ Connection	La Crosse
Hearthstone Historic House Museum	Appleton	The Rainbow Project, Inc. Child & Family Counseling and Trauma Resource Clinic	Madison
Howe Community Resource Center	Green Bay	Tikkun Ha-Ir	Milwaukee
Hunger Task Force	Milwaukee	Urban Affairs Association	Milwaukee
IN Progress Consulting LLC	Milwaukee	Urban Economic Development Association of Wisconsin (UEDA)	Milwaukee
IndependenceFirst	Milwaukee	Veterans Employment Alliance, Inc.	Greenfield
J B Plumping	Milwaukee		
La Causa, Inc.	Milwaukee		
Madison Area Bus Advocates	Madison		
Madison Community Foundation	Madison		

VLCF  
Volunteer Center of Ozaukee County Grafton  
WasteCap Resource Solutions Milwaukee  
Waukesha Civic Theatre Waukesha  
Wisconsin Breast Cancer Coalition Milwaukee  
Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers, Inc. Madison  
Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired Madison  
Wisconsin EMS Association Wind Lake  
Wisconsin Lutheran High School Milwaukee  
Wisconsin Nonprofits Association  
Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development Madison  
Wisconsin Scholastic Chess Federation Milwaukee  
Wisconsin Transit Riders Alliance Milwaukee  
YWCA - Greater Green Bay Green Bay  
YWCA Southeast Wisconsin Milwaukee

### 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