

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We the undersigned national organizations urge you in the strongest terms to oppose any and all efforts to repeal or alter the campaign intervention ban that protects 501(c)(3) organizations including religious organizations and charities.

Recently at the National Prayer Breakfast, you promised to “totally destroy the Johnson Amendment,” which is the provision in the tax code that prohibits public charities and private foundations from intervening in elections by endorsing or opposing political candidates or parties. In addition, three bills that would weaken current law— H.R. 172, H.R. 781, and S. 264—have been introduced in Congress. Existing protections preserve the integrity of houses of worship, our elections, and the tax code. Accordingly, we urge you to oppose any efforts to repeal or weaken the safeguards in current law.

For more than 60 years, this rule barring campaign intervention has helped keep tax-deductible money out of partisan politics. It has helped maintain the integrity and autonomy of our religious and charitable sectors and preserve the boundary separating church and state. It has guaranteed that Americans’ charitable giving will not be channeled into political campaigns. For those reasons, the current law is overwhelmingly supported by the public.

Without this rule, nonpartisan charities and places of worship would be open to manipulation for political ends. Up to now, charities and religious organizations have been insulated from electioneering, and instead have been committed to doing good work, like alleviating poverty, ministering to the spirit, curing disease, and addressing other basic human and social needs. Changing the law jeopardizes the public’s confidence that their charitable contributions would be used for these universally valued purposes rather than mere partisan politics. Partisan groups would have incentives to use charities and congregations as a conduit to spend secret money to influence elections, and some may pressure nonprofits to make endorsements and contributions. This pressure may be particularly acute if the organization accepts or is associated with groups that accept government money.

Politicizing the charitable sector harms our communities and our relationship with the public. We urge you to reject any attempt to remove the campaign intervention ban which protects our charitable and religious sectors from being used for political purposes.

Sincerely,

Action on Smoking and Health
Alliance for a Better Utah
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Atheists

American Family Voices
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Federation of Teachers
American Humanist Association
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc.
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Bohio Atabey, Grandmothers Council
Catholics for Choice
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good
Center for Inquiry
Citizens' Environmental Coalition
Common Cause
ConnectiCOSH
Corporate Accountability International
Council on Foundations
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
Democracy 21
End Citizens United
Every Voice
Faith in Public Life
Faith Voices Arkansas
Faithful America
Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc.
Food & Water Watch
Free Press Action Fund
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends of the Earth
Health Equity & Strategic Effectiveness
Hindu American Foundation
Human Rights Campaign
Independent Sector
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Interfaith Alliance
Jubilee East Bay
League of Women Voters of the United States
Marion's Corner
MassCOSH- Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety & Health
Minnesota Voice
Money Out Voters In (MOVI)

National Association of Social Workers
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low income clients)
National Consumers League
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Employment Lawyers Association
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Priorities Project
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy
New Ways Ministry
Patriotic Millionaires
People For the American Way
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Project Vote
Public Citizen
Public Justice Center
Public Law Center
Religious Institute
Reproductive Health Access Project
Rural Development Leadership Network
Senate Select Community Committee on California's Correctional System
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
Small Planet Institute
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
The Voter Participation Center
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Vermont Political Revolution Corporation
Voices for Progress
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)

Cc: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, and Members of Congress