

November 8, 2017

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Brady and Ranking Member Neal:

The undersigned 55 Jewish nonprofits, charitable organizations, and religious institutions strongly oppose any efforts to repeal or weaken current law that prohibits 501(c)(3) organizations from endorsing, opposing, or contributing to political candidates. The existing law, known as the Johnson Amendment, is vital to preserving the charitable sector's integrity and the public's trust in our organizations. As Congress considers comprehensive tax reform, we urge you to reject any measures that would undermine the Johnson Amendment and needlessly politicize charitable and faith communities.

Pirkei Avot, perhaps the most important Jewish ethical treatise, teaches us that "the crown of a good name is superior to them all." The integrity of our "good name" is essential to our ability to fulfill our missions. As charitable organizations, it is our life's work to serve and advocate for the needs of the most vulnerable among us.

Charitable nonprofits and houses of worship can only be successful if we maintain public trust in our integrity and commitment to mission. Politicizing them for the benefit of politicians and partisan donors would destroy that trust. Every charitable dollar spent on partisan campaign politics is one less dollar spent on the public good.

Under current law, charitable nonprofits enjoy broad latitude to speak on important public matters, advocate on policy issues, encourage people to vote, and even host candidate debates and forums. Repealing or weakening the Johnson Amendment risks dividing charities and houses of worship along partisan lines. At a time when our political climate is already so polarized, we stand firmly against any measure that would bring politics into our organizations and reduce our effectiveness.

As charitable nonprofits and houses of worship, we forego profits, privacy, and politics in order to serve our communities and do good works. We ask that you protect the integrity of our work, our good name, and the health of our democracy by opposing any efforts to undermine the Johnson Amendment.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Ameinu (Our People)

American Conference of Cantors

American Jewish Committee (AJC)

Anti-Defamation League
B'nai B'rith International
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Central Conference of American Rabbis
Habonim Dror North America
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Federations of North America
Jewish Labor Committee
Keshet
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Men of Reform Judaism
National Association of Jewish Legislators
National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry
National Council of Jewish Women
NFTY – The Reform Jewish Youth Movement
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Jewish Reconstructionist Communities
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Union for Reform Judaism
Uri L'Tzedek: The Orthodox Social Justice Movement
Women of Reform Judaism
Workmen's Circle

Local Organizations

Baltimore Jewish Council
Carolina Jews for Justice
Chicago Jewish Labor Committee
Detroit Jews for Justice
Indianapolis Jewish Community Relations Council
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Jewish Center for Justice
Jewish Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation of Columbus
Jewish Community Relations Council of JEWISHcolorado
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington
Jewish Community Relations Council of Orlando
Jewish Community Relations Council of Southern New Jersey
Jewish Community Relations Council of Tampa
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation
Jewish Federation of Cleveland
Jewish Federation of Greater Des Moines
Jewish Federation of Greater Harrisburg
Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles
Jewish Federation of Greater Orlando
Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh

Jewish Federation of Greater Santa Barbara
Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle
Jewish Federation of Silicon Valley
New England Chapter of the Jewish Labor Committee
New Jersey State Association of Jewish Federations
Philadelphia Chapter of the Jewish Labor Committee