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Nonprofit and Philanthropic Leaders Call on Congress to Leave the Johnson Amendment Alone

Nonprofit and philanthropic leaders renew their call for preserving the Johnson Amendment, the longstanding law that protects their organizations from the divisiveness of partisan politics. The call comes as House Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-LA) used the National Prayer Breakfast today to express support for repealing this important protection.

Maintaining the law unchanged is indeed the prevailing view across the country, as reflected in the [Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship](#), signed by more than 5,600 organizations in all 50 states, in the [Faith Voices letter](#) signed by more than 4,300 faith leaders, in the separate letter signed by more than [100 denominations and major religious organizations](#), and another letter from the [law enforcement community](#), as well as polls showing that 72 percent of the [public support keeping the Johnson Amendment](#) in place and nearly [90 percent of evangelical pastors](#) who say it is wrong for preachers to endorse candidates from the pulpit. On February 7, nearly 150 national organizations sent a [letter to House and Senate appropriators](#) expressing their strong opposition to inclusion of anti-Johnson Amendment language in spending bills that Congress will soon be considering.

Leaders from across the charitable, religious, and philanthropic communities shared why this protection must remain in place:

Anne Wallestad, President and CEO of **BoardSource**: “At BoardSource, we believe in the importance of nonprofit engagement in discussions about public policies that impact our missions and the people and communities we serve. But we also understand that electioneering is a completely different matter, and that allowing nonprofits to endorse and support specific candidates is a dangerous and slippery slope. That is why we strongly oppose any effort to weaken or repeal the Johnson Amendment.”

Vikki Spruill, President and CEO of the **Council on Foundations**: “Charitable foundations serve to channel the generosity of private citizens towards the causes and issues that resonate with their passions and experiences. For them to continue to fulfill this purpose, it is crucial that the public trust they have earned over the years is not diminished by partisan labels or influence.”

Tim Delaney, President and CEO of the **National Council of Nonprofits**: “The nonprofit community cannot afford the division and lack of trust that plague the partisan political process. Leaving partisan labels at the door allows nonprofit employees, board members, and volunteers to come together in service of that nonprofit’s mission – something that wouldn’t be possible if the longstanding Johnson Amendment is weakened in any way.”

Lee Sherman, President and CEO of the **National Human Services Assembly**: “The Johnson Amendment allows nonprofits to cultivate public trust in the sector’s public services, facilitate cross-sector collaboration, and offer bipartisan solutions that are core to our missions and the development of well-being in our communities. Weakening the Johnson Amendment will create pressure on nonprofits to divert resources to political campaigns, identify with a political party, and accept funding that is conditioned on supporting or opposing specific candidates. It is, therefore, important that the protections against participation in political campaign activities remain intact, leaving organizations free to focus on their missions.”

Jatrice Martel Gaiter, Executive Vice President of External Affairs for **Volunteers of America**: “Nonprofit human service providers are bracing for large cuts to programs that help the sick, the disabled, the undereducated and veterans, among many others. Our sector remains one of the last bastions free from politics and

partisanship. When it comes to our staff, board members and volunteers, we have but one mission ... to support our clients. Partisan differences are set aside to focus on the uniting power of our shared goals. Any tinkering with the Johnson Amendment would dissolve the line of demarcation from political fundraising and endorsements that has existed in the nonprofit sector since 1954. Please preserve the Johnson Amendment and maintain the nonpartisan environment that allows nonprofits to continue helping people in need rebuild their lives and reach their full potential.”

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About the Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

The Community Letter – signed by more than 5,600 organizations from all 50 states – is part of a collaborative initiative led by [National Council of Nonprofits](#), [Alliance for Strong Families and Communities](#), [BoardSource](#), [Council on Foundations](#), [Habitat for Humanity International](#), [Independent Sector](#), [Jewish Federations of North America](#), [National Human Services Assembly](#), [United Philanthropy Forum](#), and [Volunteers of America](#). This broad-based coalition has formed to protect a cornerstone of the 501(c)(3) community, its ability to solve problems in localities across the country by bringing people together without the rancor of partisan politics getting in the way. The initiative seeks to protect the current law (known as the Johnson Amendment) that ensures 501(c)(3) organizations remain nonpartisan and focused on mission instead of partisan politics. Learn more at www.GiveVoice.org.