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Nonprofits to Congress: Don't Politicize Houses of Worship

In response to the inclusion by the House Appropriations Committee of a rider (Section 116) that weakens the [Johnson Amendment](#) (a longstanding law that protects nonprofits from divisive partisanship) in the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Act today, National Council of Nonprofits President and CEO Tim Delaney released the following statement:

“There are many problems bedeviling our country, but unleashing partisan politics into our houses of worship will not solve any of them. For charitable nonprofits, houses of worship, and foundations that work every day to solve problems in their communities, nonpartisanship is not merely a concept; it is a way of life. That way of life came under direct assault today when the House Appropriations Committee voted to keep an unconstitutional and unworkable provision (Section 116) in the Financial Services appropriations bill.

“The partisan provision in the Financial Services bill erects insurmountable barriers that will prevent law enforcement officials at the IRS from stopping houses of worship from turning over their collection plates to campaign coffers and converting religious broadcast programming into explicit campaign ads that are exempt from campaign finance laws.

“This isn’t just a solution in search of a problem; it is a blind response to a narrow interest that ignores the will of those being hurt, as expressed by nearly [one hundred religious denominations and organizations](#), more than [3,000 religious leaders](#), [89 percent of evangelical pastors](#), more than [4,800 charitable nonprofits](#), houses of worship, and foundations and [72 percent of American voters](#).

“The Johnson Amendment has never stopped a discussion of the issues of the day. Rather, it has been a vital protection for nonprofit missions, religious and otherwise, for more than 60 years. Being able to point to current law when saying “no” to politicians and their operatives has enabled nonprofits to focus on serving their communities, rather than catering to the desires of political candidates and their powerful donors.

“Perhaps it is too much to expect sound decisions on this issue from partisan politicians who may benefit from politicizing the nonprofit community in order to extract money and endorsements from trusted charitable, philanthropic, and religious organizations. For those of us in those nonprofit organizations tasked with getting the work done in communities – while the battling partisans are yelling past each other to score political points – this is a very sad day.

“We hope that those in Congress will come to their senses and remove this damaging and unconstitutional rider before it advances any further.”

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About the National Council of Nonprofits

The National Council of Nonprofits (Council of Nonprofits) is a trusted resource and proven advocate for America’s charitable nonprofits. Connecting the policy dots across all levels and branches of governments, the Council of Nonprofits keeps nonprofits informed and empowered to create a positive public policy environment that best supports nonprofits in advancing their missions. Working with and through the nation’s largest network of nonprofits – with 25,000-plus organizational members – we identify emerging trends, share proven practices, and promote solutions that benefit charitable nonprofits and the communities they serve. Learn more at www.councilofnonprofits.org.