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Not Taking “No” for an Answer



After years of negotiations, Congress may be on the verge of enacting a package of tax breaks that would help low-income families and many businesses, but currently fails to include restoration of the [non-itemizer \(universal\) charitable deduction](#), a major priority of the nonprofit sector. Reasons for this omission have been explained as “too expensive,” not enough interest in the House, and fear of opening up the package lest a flood of additional amendments overwhelm the bill and result in no action at all. None of those excuses gives comfort to charitable nonprofits who recognize that this may be the only tax bill with a chance of making it through Congress for a year or more. The “no” heard so far harms the communities charitable organizations serve; it’s adverse to your missions. So we must ALL act. Now.

Using the Tools We Have

Not taking no for an answer means pulling out all the stops, putting the pedal to the metal, and deploying every other cliché known and unknown. Here are a few examples of tools nonprofits and their allies are utilizing:

- **The Power of News Releases:** Nonprofit champions in Congress are stepping up. On January 18, Senators Lankford (R-OK) and Coons (D-DE) [issued statements](#) insisting on “the extension of their highly supported non-itemized charitable tax deduction, which was previously included in the CARES Act, in the bicameral tax agreement announced earlier this week.”
- **Messaging Matters:** The next day, on January 19, Senator [Lankford issued a second release](#) shared numerous statements of support from prominent nonprofit groups across the country, all framing the message in the most essential and clear terms. Among those included in the release was a statement from Tim Delaney, President & CEO of the National Council of Nonprofits:

“It is heartening that tax writers have come together with a bipartisan package of tax provisions to help support families, businesses, and individuals. Yet the vital tax incentive for charitable giving – that was allowed to expire at the end of 2021 – so far is absent from this important legislation. The charitable nonprofit sector is constantly called on by families, businesses, and communities to improve the wellbeing of others, but donations to do so are down; tax relief is urgently needed. We join with our colleagues from across the country in calling on Representatives and Senators to insist on restoration of the non-itemizer (universal) charitable deduction as a component of tax legislation that is enacted by Congress.”

- **The Power of Numbers - the Sign-On Letter:** There is no doubt in the House and Senate that a significant priority of the whole charitable sector is restoration of the giving incentive. Shortly before Congress adjourned for the holidays last year, the Charitable Giving Coalition sent a [letter to policymakers](#) signed by more than 1,000 organizations from all 50 states laying out the arguments and need for greater giving to support the work done by nonprofits on behalf of the Representatives’ and Senators’ constituents. As readers of *Nonprofit Champion* know, the letter has remained open for new organizations to sign on. Your nonprofit can join others by [signing here now](#). Those updates are shared with the Hill on a regular basis to prove the importance and building interest in the policy.

- **The Power of Numbers - The Direct Appeal:** Quite frankly, the more nonprofits that Members of Congress hear from, the more likely they will take positive action. Or the greater the discomfort they will feel if they continue to tell you “no.” Since the time to act is now, we repeat the Action Item from earlier in this edition of *Nonprofit Champion*:



ACTION ITEM: Representatives and Senators need to hear immediately from the charitable nonprofit community. Call your [Representatives](#) and [Senators](#) today and tell them: “**The [Representative/Senator] must insist on restoration of the non-itemizer (universal) deduction as a provision in any tax package under consideration.**” You can also write your [Representatives](#) and [Senators](#) to deliver the message via email.

There are, of course, many more tricks of the trade – op-eds, news conferences, public demonstrations, advertisements in publications lawmakers are likely to read, etc. In recent months and years, all have been, and will continue to be, utilized.

Right now, though, calls and emails are the best tools every nonprofit professional can employ to get the point across: “**The [Representative/Senator] must insist on restoration of the non-itemizer (universal) deduction as a provision in any tax package under consideration.**”