

*Updated March 2018*

## Human Services are Essential to Building Well-Being

The organizations that comprise the human service sector share a common mission: to help make sure everyone can reach their full potential and contribute to our communities in meaningful ways. The sector provides the elements and materials that build individual well-being—everything from access to social relationships, to opportunities for young people to play and learn, to places for people with disabilities or mental illness to receive the support they need to live independently. Human services ensure that *all* individuals have what they need to do well socially, emotionally, financially, and physically and to engage in our communities. Human service organizations represent a vast network of expert professionals who build well-being, just like the skilled architects, electricians, and contractors who build a house.

## The Johnson Amendment Protects Human Services

We know that our sector is most effective when our resources are focused on mission-related work, not distracted by political campaigns. Like the walls of a house, the [Johnson Amendment](#) protects nonprofits from the ever-shifting political winds by keeping partisan campaigns outside the scope of our advocacy work. We should continue to be strong advocates for the issues that affect our communities, but without the pressure to become involved in partisan politics. We ask that Congress keep the Johnson Amendment intact.

## The Johnson Amendment Frees Nonprofits to Achieve Their Missions

The protections afforded to nonprofits by the Johnson Amendment have allowed the sector to focus on mission-related work that ensures everyone has what they need to thrive. Over time, this has made nonprofits and the human service sector a go-to source for expert advice, research, and programs, while generating deep public trust in nonprofits' abilities to provide solutions to our toughest problems. Because of the Johnson Amendment, nonprofits are able to:

- Cultivate public trust in nonprofits' solutions, cross-sector collaborations, and expert staff;
- Advocate for specific issues and bipartisan solutions that are core to our missions and driving well-being in communities;
- Fully commit financial resources directly to helping individuals thrive and communities become vibrant;
- Allow nonprofit boards to focus on achieving organizational missions and community outcomes;
- Provide high-level donors the opportunity to address specific issues based on the strengths and assets of 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.

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## The Johnson Amendment is Not a Freedom of Religion Issue

A minority of religious organizations that favor repealing the Amendment are presenting the issue as a violation of the constitutional protections for freedom of religion. These groups, in turn, mischaracterize the possibility of losing a federal income tax exemption as a First Amendment violation. The Supreme Court has [held](#), however, that the “collection and payment of a generally applicable tax . . . imposes no constitutionally significant burden” on an organization’s free exercise of religion. Nonprofits are, and should be, expert advocates for the public policy issues that impact our communities. We strongly believe that agreeing to refrain from participation in political campaign activities as a condition for receiving tax-exempt status does not infringe the First Amendment rights of religious institutions.

## Public Opinion Favors Keeping the Johnson Amendment Intact

An overwhelming majority of Americans, nonprofits, religious institutions, and foundations believe that 501(c)(3) organizations benefit from the protections of the Johnson Amendment:

- A March 2017 poll found that [72%](#) of American voters want to keep the current rules for nonprofits in place;
- 4,000 faith leaders wrote a [letter](#) to Congress asking that houses of worship remain nonpartisan; and
- More than 5,600 organizations have signed the [Community Letter in Support of Nonprofit Nonpartisanship](#) which voices the nonprofit sector’s strong opposition to efforts to repeal or weaken the Johnson Amendment.

### Take Action

Policymakers play a critical role in making sure communities have the resources and systems they need to build and maintain the well-being of their residents at every stage of life. Your support to protect the Johnson Amendment is crucial to maintaining the public trust that the nonprofit sector has earned by bridging our communities through nonpartisan efforts and bipartisan solutions.

We ask you to publicly **reject any effort to repeal or weaken** the Johnson Amendment by:

- **Opposing** policy riders to appropriations bills that would curtail the IRS’s enforcement of the Johnson Amendment with respect to churches; and
- **Opposing** legislation introduced either to repeal ([H.R.172](#)) or significantly weaken ([H.R.781/S.265](#)) the Johnson Amendment.



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