WN Opposes the Repeal of the Johnson Amendment

The Johnson Amendment is a federal tax law provision proposed by then Senator B. Lyndon Johnson and passed in 1954. It makes tax-exempt entities like churches and charitable organizations under the 501(c) 3 status unable to *directly or indirectly participate in any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate*. Considered uncontroversial at the time, it was passed by a Republican Congress and signed into law by President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Recently, President Trump spoke at the National Prayer Breakfast and reiterated an earlier pledge to "get rid of and totally destroy" the Johnson Amendment. The U.S. Congress is now considering three bills that would politicize charitable nonprofits (*S.264* in the U.S. Senate and *H.R. 781* and *H.R. 172* in the U.S. House of Representatives).

*Washington Nonprofits joins The Independent Sector, the National Council of Nonprofits and many other charitable nonprofits in strongly opposing efforts to politicize charities by eliminating the Johnson Amendment. We oppose the politicization of nonprofits for these reasons:*

1. These proposals would politicize the sector, subjecting nonprofits and foundations to demands for campaign contributions (and thereby divert donors' money away from mission-related work to benefit politicians).
2. A repeal would damage public trust in the work of nonprofits, who value the impartiality and independence of our sector and our requirement, as written in statute to "do good" It is important to remember that the voting public has greater trust of charities in America than political parties or any one politician. See *Independent Sector's United for Charity report*.
3. The repeal of the Johnson Amendment is completely unnecessary. Nonprofits - and their individual staff, board members, and volunteers - already have many legal avenues to freely express their views on a wide range of policy issues through existing laws that allow for advocacy of our missions to policymakers.

If you agree with our position, please take action by writing to Senators *Murray* and *Cantwell* and to your US Representative (*use this link to navigate to yours*). If you are in favor of the repeal of the Johnson Amendment, we would like to hear your thoughts on why. Please email *info@washingtonnonprofits.org* and tell us why.