

## Independent Sector Statement of Principles on Political Activity December 2013

The Independent Sector Board of Directors has an abiding interest in the regulation of partisan political activity by 501 (c)(4) social welfare organizations and the implications for the charitable and philanthropic sector as a whole.

The growing sums of money flowing into the political arena from some social welfare organizations, reports of abuses, and proposed changes in Internal Revenue Service regulations are matters of deep concern to Independent Sector.

It is essential that all stakeholders engage in a lively debate over what constitutes permissible partisan political activity by tax exempt organizations and how those activities should be regulated.

Independent Sector proposes **three principles** to help guide that debate:

1. The “primary purpose” standard for judging permissible partisan political activity has proved ambiguous and subject to abuse. It should be replaced by clear expenditure limits on partisan political activity by tax exempt organizations.
2. The public's right to know who spends money to influence election outcomes requires maximum transparency regarding the identity of donors funding partisan political activity.
3. Any measures designed to curb abuses must be carefully construed to avoid any infringement on nonpartisan civic engagement activities traditionally undertaken by the nonprofit sector. These include nonpartisan voter registration, as well as get-out-the-vote drives, voter guides, and bipartisan candidate forums, and other activities that have enhanced democratic participation for decades