



INDEPENDENT
SECTOR

Independent Sector Statement of Beliefs Regarding Federal Tax and Spending Policies

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An Introduction

Americans, regardless of political affiliation, are yearning for a process of deep renewal in our nation. Our founder, John W. Gardner, wrote, “there can be no long-continued renewal without liberty, pluralism, and regard for the worth of the individual.”

These three values are, and have always been, foundational to the work of the charitable sector. We believe they must also animate the process of renewal in our nation.

Upcoming debates on federal tax and spending policies present our elected leaders with a critical opportunity to promote policies informed by the values of liberty, pluralism, and the worth of the individual. These policy debates set the foundation for who we are as a country, how we value our people, and how we seek to lead at home and in the world.

As the voice of the third largest sector in the American economy, Independent Sector continually listens to the public charities, foundations, and corporations we represent. The following beliefs are informed by this process and represent a critical lens through which we view the tax and spending policy choices that affect the work we do and the people we serve.

Reforming Our Tax Code

We believe the federal tax code must protect and promote the freedom to form, fund, and operate independent institutions that pursue the public good.

The government alone cannot solve our problems or ensure opportunity. Private associations, though they cannot replace the role of government, are an essential partner in strengthening America. Policies should reinforce America’s pluralistic heritage that encourages the existence of many sources of initiative and many forms of voluntary association to solve problems, protect the natural world, and improve lives, families, and communities.

We believe that federal tax policy must unlock and ignite the great American tradition of charitable giving and volunteering.

Incentives that promote charitable giving must be preserved and enhanced in ways that encourage all taxpayers to give, respect the freedom of individuals to determine the causes and organizations they will support, and treat those choices equitably. The tax deduction for charitable giving is unique in its importance as it allows Americans to exercise their First Amendment rights to advance their own vision of the public good without government interference.

We believe that the federal tax code is a defining component of the relationship between government and society.

Entitlement or revenue changes must not increase burdens on those at the bottom of the income scale or least able to care for themselves.

Investment and Non-discretionary Spending

We believe that societies thrive when all people have an opportunity to prosper and succeed.

It is therefore critical that national investment and spending policies prioritize programs that are demonstrating their promise and effectiveness in increasing economic mobility for **all** Americans.

We believe that every individual counts.

All people have the potential to be agents of renewal and innovation in their own lives, families, and community. In the end, we are all accountable to these individuals. National investment and spending policies must strive to help them realize their potential, regardless of their ability or background.

We believe in the power of the unique partnership between government and the charitable sector.

Experience shows that deep collaboration between these two sectors is critical to advancing the common good and scaling important social change. Rigorous and respectful dialogue between government and a diverse spectrum of charitable institutions – from arts and culture to environment to human services – must be a priority as policy decisions are made. This partnership – and greater cooperation between the government, charitable, and business sectors – must be encouraged and preserved as a core means of helping communities thrive.

We believe that, when spending reductions are required, those reductions should not increase poverty or widen inequality.

Programs that provide critical support to the nation's most vulnerable populations must be safeguarded, especially for indigent people who are elderly or living with disabilities and families with children living in poverty.