



Independent Sector



December 10, 2025

Religious Liberty Commission  
Debate Chamber, Pavilion Building  
3819 Maple Ave  
Dallas, TX 75219

Via Email: [RLC@usdoj.gov](mailto:RLC@usdoj.gov)

RE: Hearing on Religious Liberty in the Military

Dear Religious Liberty Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony during the fourth hearing to discuss religious liberty issues in the military as well as “state and local religious liberty issues.” On behalf of the Council on Foundations, Independent Sector, National Council of Nonprofits, and United Philanthropy Forum, we submit this testimony to underscore the importance of maintaining and preserving the Johnson Amendment, the part of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, which, for more than 70 years, has safeguarded the integrity of America’s charitable nonprofits, houses of worship, and foundations. The federal law keeps nonprofits focused on mission, not partisan politics, by prohibiting charitable organizations from endorsing or opposing political candidates. Federal law preserves public trust and protects these vital institutions from partisan pressure and manipulation.

Our organizations collectively represent tens of thousands of charitable and philanthropic organizations that employ millions of individuals in every state, engage tens of millions of additional individuals who serve as board members and other volunteers, and touch the lives of virtually every American every day. We stand united with the majority of charitable, religious, and philanthropic organizations across America in opposition to any effort to repeal or weaken the Johnson Amendment.

**The Johnson Amendment protects public trust in civil society.**

Charitable nonprofits exist to serve the public good, not partisan interests. Efforts to make nonprofits partisan or politicized threaten their ability to provide essential services and undermine public trust in these vital institutions. The Johnson Amendment protects nonprofits' and foundations' ability to serve while keeping the focus on fairness, trust, and preserving spaces that unite – not divide – our communities. Nonprofits need broad public support and bipartisan cooperation to fulfill their missions. If the Johnson Amendment is weakened, charitable nonprofits will be drawn into partisan battles. This will divide who they serve; undermine what makes them effective; weaken our communities; threaten the independence of charitable nonprofits; undermine public trust; give tax breaks to donors for campaign contributions; and distract nonprofits, houses of worship, and philanthropy from their missions.

By contrast, when nonprofits stay out of partisan politics, they can serve the whole community without fear of political favoritism; maintain credibility with donors, congregants, and the broader public; and focus on their mission, not political endorsements.

Protection against partisanship is not about silencing voices. Faith leaders and charitable nonprofits *can* and *should* speak out on moral, social, and public policy issues that impact their missions. They serve as vital voices in our society on a wide range of issues, including justice, freedom, community values, civic engagement, and more. Federal law draws the line at endorsing or opposing candidates for office – a line that protects the independence of the pulpit, nonprofits, and the ballot box. The independence of these community institutions depends on keeping partisanship out of them.

**The majority of nonprofits and foundations oppose partisan politics in nonprofits.**

Local nonprofits are lifelines for communities across the country. According to polling from Independent Sector, eight in 10 voters (81%) [trust nonprofits](#) to serve their community in a nonpartisan way — including at least 78% of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents.

During previous legislative attempts to weaken the Johnson Amendment, the majority of charitable nonprofit organizations also supported keeping partisan politics out of their organizations, as reflected in a [community letter](#) signed by more than 5,800 organizations in all 50 states, in the [Faith Voices letter](#) signed by more than 4,300 faith leaders, in a separate letter signed by more than [100 denominations and major religious organizations](#), and in letters from the [law enforcement community](#).

Our organizations, representing the 501(c)(3) community of charitable, religious, and philanthropic organizations, strongly oppose any effort to repeal or weaken the Johnson Amendment.

Sincerely,

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Council on Foundations

Dr. Akilah Watkins  
President and CEO  
Independent Sector

Diane Yentel  
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