Dear Representative/Senator

Throughout your career you have been a supporter of nonprofit organizations, and we appreciate your support. Those of us who are constituents are especially grateful for your support to organizations in our region.

We are writing to you today to urge you stand with the broad charitable community -- including the nonprofits, houses of worship, and foundations that serve your district -- instead of the narrow special interests that put money and partisan politics above the health of community serving nonprofit organizations.

That is the dilemma before the conference committee on H.R. 6147, the appropriations bill that funds the IRS and many other federal agencies. Section 112 of the Financial Services part of the spending bill is an extremely controversial provision that seeks to effectively prevent the IRS from enforcing the longstanding Johnson Amendment against even the most egregious violations. Since 1954, and with the full support of the broad nonprofit community, federal tax law has protected charitable, religious, and philanthropic organizations from demands by politicians and donors to endorse candidates for public office or divert charitable resources to fund partisan campaigns.

In exchange for not endorsing political candidates and for staying out of the partisan fray, charitable organizations are able to receive tax deductible contributions to support their important work in communities. The provision in the appropriations bill would, for the first time, enable donors to charitable organizations to fund partisan campaigns through politically active “churches” and reduce their tax bills by claiming their donations are to charity. Legislative language similar to Section 112 was judged by the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation to cost taxpayers billions of dollars because the official scorekeepers of Congress determined that partisan donors will do just that – shift their contributions to politically active charitable organizations in order to get the tax deduction.

The vast charitable community vehemently opposes the anti-Johnson Amendment language in House version of H.R. 6147. More than 250 organizations from our state and more than 5,800 nationwide have all signed the [Community Letter in Support of Nonprofit Nonpartisanship](https://www.givevoice.org/community-letter-signers#WA)– all urging you and your colleagues in Congress to respect the integrity and effectiveness of nonprofits that are made possible by the Johnson Amendment. Further, although Section 112 relates to “churches,” every organized [denomination expressing an opinion on the Johnson Amendment](http://bjconline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Letter-from-faith-groups-opposing-politicization-of-houses-of-worship.pdf) – more than 100 – is urging Congress to oppose any and all efforts to change the law. Further, more than 4,500 religious leaders signed the [Faith Voices letter](https://www.faith-voices.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) urging you and all Members of Congress “to oppose any repeal or weakening of the Johnson Amendment, thereby protecting the independence and integrity of houses of worship and other religious organizations in the charitable sector.” Moreover, the [law enforcement community](https://www.givevoice.org/sites/default/files/NASCO%20Letter%20to%20Congressional%20Leaders%20re%20Johnson%20Amendment%208.23.2017.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), as reflected in a letter from the National Association of State Charities Officials, makes the compelling case that weakening Johnson Amendment enforcement would “compromise the ability of state charities officials to identify and take action against fraud and abuse of charitable solicitations and use of charitable assets.

To return to where we started, we ask you to stand with the broad charitable community in your district and across the country by taking action to ensure that the House-passed anti-Johnson Amendment rider is cut from the final version of H.R. 6147 coming out of the conference committee. As a key member of our state’s congressional delegation, we know that you are in the position to communicate the strong opposition of the nonprofit community to this controversial and extraneous rider. All charitable nonprofits, houses of worship, and foundations in Washington State are counting on you to stand with us.

Sincerely,