



## TALKING POINTS

# Supporting The Johnson Amendment

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The Johnson Amendment protects the integrity of tax-exempt organizations, including houses of worship, by ensuring they do not endorse or oppose candidates. Americans do not want our charities and houses of worship to be torn apart by partisan campaign politics.

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## CHARITIES AND HOUSES OF WORSHIP ARE TAX FREE BECAUSE THEY WORK FOR THE COMMON GOOD, NOT SO THEY CAN SUPPORT POLITICAL CANDIDATES

- If we repeal or weaken the Johnson Amendment, taxpayers would essentially be forced to subsidize the political campaign activities of churches and other non-profits. Changing the law would also incentivize donations to organizations to support political candidates when the whole purpose of the tax-exemption is to support work that serves the community.
- The repeal or weakening of current law would dismantle the non-profit structure as we know it and fundamentally change the character of tax-exempt organizations.

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## POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES SEEKING POWER SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO USE OUR CHURCHES AND CHARITIES AS POLITICAL CAMPAIGN TOOLS

- Current law ensures that sanctuaries remain sacred and houses of worship focus on fostering community and performing good works. This also applies to secular non-profit organizations, who without the pressure to shift their resources to candidates and campaigns, can focus on fulfilling their missions.
- No one wants political candidates and those seeking political power to be able to use houses of worship and other charities for their own personal political gain. This is especially true when these entities are receiving special tax-exempt status.

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## CHANGING CURRENT LAW TO ENCOURAGE CHURCHES TO ENDORSE AND OPPOSE POLITICAL CANDIDATES WILL DIVIDE CONGREGATIONS

- Americans do not need or want more places to be divided from one another over political candidates running for office.
- Changing the law could lead to divisions within houses of worship and among congregants, as they become split along party lines. It could also pit houses of worship against each other.
- Changing the law could also divide charities along party lines. For example, a community could see two adversarial food pantries spring up—one that is run by and funded by Republicans and only serves those who will support Republican candidates, and the other that is run by and funded by Democrats and only serves those who will support Democratic candidates.

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## **HOUSES OF WORSHIP AND THEIR LEADERS HAVE ROBUST FREE SPEECH RIGHTS AND CAN ALREADY SPEAK OUT ON POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES**

- Houses of worship and all non-profits can speak out on political or social issues. For instance, houses of worship can take positions on issues of concern, lobby on legislation and endorse or oppose non-partisan referendum, host candidate forums and distribute answers to candidate questionnaires, and encourage people to vote, including through voter registration drives and driving people to the polls.
- Church leaders are absolutely free to support or endorse political candidates as private citizens or even run for office—just like any of us can.

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## **AMERICANS DON'T WANT CHURCHES IN THE BUSINESS OF ENDORSING OR OPPOSING POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES**

- Changing the law is extremely unpopular. Two different polls conducted in March 2017 (one by Independent Sector and one by PRRI) found that more than 70% of voters want to keep the Johnson Amendment in place. Sixty-two percent of Republicans and fifty-six percent of white evangelical Protestants also support current law. Read more about the recent polls.



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