September 13, 2018

Dear Representative:

As a leader in my religious community in Missouri, I am strongly opposed to any effort to repeal or weaken current law that protects houses of worship from becoming centers of partisan politics. Changing the law would threaten the integrity and independence of houses of worship. We must not allow our sacred spaces to be transformed into spaces used to endorse or oppose political candidates.

Faith leaders are called to speak truth to power, and we cannot do so if we are merely cogs in partisan political machines. The prophetic role of faith communities necessitates that we retain our independent voice. Current law respects this independence and strikes the right balance: houses of worship that enjoy favored tax-exempt status may engage in advocacy to address moral and political issues, but they cannot tell people who to vote for or against. Nothing in current law, however, prohibits me from endorsing or opposing political candidates in my own personal capacity.

Changing the law to repeal or weaken the “Johnson Amendment” – the section of the tax code that prevents tax-exempt nonprofit organizations from endorsing or opposing candidates – would harm houses of worship, which are not identified or divided by partisan lines. Particularly in today’s political climate, engaging in partisan politics and issuing endorsements would be highly divisive and have a detrimental impact on congregational unity and civil discourse.

I therefore urge you 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.

Respectfully,*

*This letter is signed by 133 faith leaders from the state of Missouri. A nationwide letter, available at www.faith-voices.org, has over 4,600 signers.
Rev. Charles Ackerson, Supply Pastor
United Church of Christ
Jeffriesburg, MO

Rev. Audrey Alexander, Pastor
Hope United Church of Christ, DeSoto
DeSoto, MO

Rev. Dr. Heather Arcovitch, President
St. Louis Association of UCCs, United Church of Christ
St. Louis, MO

Mr. Mike Backer, Deacon, Song Leader, Treasurer
Providence Baptist Church
New Bloomfield, MO

Rev. Philip Ball, Retired Pastor
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
St. Charles, MO

Sharon Ball, Lay Leader
Cooperative Baptists Fellowship
Saint Charles, MO

Rev. Carole Barner, Senior Minister
United Church of Christ
St. Louis, MO

Rev. Janice Barnes, Pastor
Trinity United Church of Christ
St. Louis, MO

Rev. Dr. Ed Baxter, Pastor
American Baptist Churches USA
Kansas City, MO

Rev. Dr. David Beebe, Interim Pastor
United Church of Christ
Lake St. Louis, MO

Rabbi James Bennett, Senior Rabbi
Congregation Shaare Emeth
Saint Louis, MO

Mr. Alex Michael Bice, Lay Leader
First Baptist
Jefferson City, MO

Rev. Dr. Michael Bone, Senior Pastor
Zion United Church of Christ
Union, MO

Sister Renita Brummer,
Catholic, Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help
St. Louis, MO

Rev. Cynthia S. Bumb, Clergy
United Church of Christ
St. Louis, MO

Rev. Dr. Cathleen Burnett, Associate Director
Hermitage Spiritual Retreat Center
Pittsburg, MO

Dr. Daniel Chisholm, Senior Pastor
University Heights Baptist Church
Springfield, MO

Rev. Hannah Coe, Associate Pastor
First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, MO
Jefferson City, MO

Dr. Larry Colvin, Regional Minister
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America, First Christian Church
St. Joseph, MO

Dr. Mike Cowan, Lay Leader
Baptist General Convention of Missouri
Oak Ridge, MO

Rev. Dr. Sheldon Culver, Acting Senior Minister
First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
St. Louis, MO

Dorothy Cunningham, Deacon
Kirkwood Baptist Church
Chesterfield, MO

Rev. Liz Deveney, Pastor
Trinity United Church of Christ
Lexington, MO
Miss Eldonna DeWeese, Church Choir Member
First Baptist Church
Bolivar, MO

Rev. Kristin Dow, Co-Pastor
New Song Church
Kansas City, MO

Sr. Sara Dwyer, JPIC Coordinator
Sister Adorers of the Blood of Christ, U.S. Region
St Louis, MO

Ms. Jane Earnhart, UCC Delegate
Bethany Peace United Church of Christ
Springfield, MO

Dr. Jason Edwards, Senior Pastor
Second Baptist Church
Liberty, MO

Don Engelbrecht, Deacon
First Baptist Church of Tipton, Missouri
Tipton, MO

Lucy Engelbrecht, Lay Leader
First Baptist Church of Tipton, Missouri
Tipton, MO

Rev. Bryan England, Deacon
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Kansas City, MO

Sister Pamela Falter, Religious Vocation Director
Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help
St. Louis, MO

Rev. Dennis Ferguson, Retired Pastor
First Baptist Church
Columbia, MO

Rev. Dr. Jane Fisler Hoffman, Retired Clergy
United Church of Christ
Raytown, MO

Rev. Cheryl Flaim, Pastor
United Methodist Church
Kirksville, MO

Rev. Dr. Brian W. Ford, Executive Director
Churchnet
Jefferson City, MO

Rev. Jody Furnas-Wright, Minister
United Church of Christ
Lees Summit, MO

Dr. Bruce Gentry, Moderator
First Baptist Church Cape Girardeau
Cape Girardeau, MO

Rev. Janet Given, Senior Minister
South Street Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Springfield, MO

Rabbi Andrea Goldstein, Rabbi
Congregation Shaare Emeth
Saint Louis, MO

Ms. Leigh Hunt Greenhaw, Lay Leader
United Church of Christ
Webster Groves, MO

Dr. Allen Grothe, Retired Senior Pastor
United Church of Christ
St. Louis, MO

Rev. Dr. Christopher Grundy, Associate Dean for the Chapel
Eden Theological Seminary
Webster Groves, MO

Rev. Jeffery Hammonds, Retired Pastor
United Church of Christ
Polar Bluff, MO

Kimberly Hampton, Executive Director
Imani Community Church
Saint Louis, MO

Rev. Jillian Hankamer,
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
St. Louis, MO
Melissa Hattman, Body Secretary
United Church of Christ
Saint Louis, MO

Sr. Mary Ann Hilgeman,
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
St Louis, MO

Rev. Dr. James Hill, Special Assistant to the Executive Director
Churchnet (Baptist General Convention of Missouri)
Jefferson City, MO

Dr. Melvin (Pete) Jr. Hill, Pastor
Windsor United Methodist Church
Windsor, MO

Phillip Hockensmith, Chair, Board of Missions
University Heights Baptist Church
Springfield, MO

Rev. Wayne Hoffman, Supply Pastor
United Church of Christ
St. Charles, MO

Rev. Dr. James Hogue, Pastor
Ebenezer Stone United Church of Christ
Clarksburg, MO

Rev. Anna Holladay, Pastor of Missions and Communication
Holmeswood Baptist Church
Kansas City, MO

Cynthia Holmes, Deacon
Overland Baptist Church
St. Louis, MO

Rev. Roger Horn, Retired Minister
United Church of Christ
Arnold, MO

Rev. John Jackson, Field Service Director
Future Leadership Foundation
Farmington, MO

Rev. David Johnson, Pastor
Overland Baptist Church
St. Louis, MO

Rev. Martha Jolly, Clergy
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Columbia, MO

Tasha Kaminsky, Co-Founder
Ashreinu STL
St. Louis, MO

Dr. Brian Kaylor, Editor & President
Word&Way
Jefferson City, MO

Rev. Donna Kendrick-Philips, Retired Pastor
United Church of Christ
St. Louis, MO

Rev. David Ketchum, Associate Pastor
Christian Community Church
Springfield, MO

Rev. Armin Klemme, Retired Pastor
United Church of Christ
Union, MO

Rev. Dr. Paul Koch, Regional Minister
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America
Washington, MO

Dr. Joseph Kutter, Retired
American Baptist Churches, USA
Kansas City, MO

Rev. Allen Ladage, Retired Local Church Pastor
United Methodist Church
Green Park, MO

Lynne Lampe, Lay Leader
First Baptist Church
Columbia, MO

Jeff Langford, Executive Coordinator
CBF Heartland
Liberty, MO
Mr. Collin Larimore, Sub-Deacon, Lay Leader  
St. James Episcopal Church  
Springfield, MO  

Mr. John Larson, Committeeman  
St. Lucas United Church of Christ  
St. Louis, MO  

Mr. Lawrence D. Leip, Former Council President  
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, ELCA  
Jefferson City, MO  

Rev. Dr. Kristen Leslie, Professor of Pastoral Care & Theology  
Eden Theological Seminary  
Saint Louis, MO  

Rabbi Alan Londy, Rabbi  
The New Reform Temple  
Kansas City, MO  

Rev. Dr. Lisa Martin, Senior Pastor  
St. John United Church of Christ  
St. Charles, MO  

Rev. Dr. Clint McCann, Professor  
Eden Theological Seminary  
St. Louis, MO  

Rev. Dr. Sarah McCann, Pastor  
Hope United Church of Christ  
Saint Louis, MO  

Rev. Joshua McCrory Hatcher, Senior Pastor  
Historic Trinity Lutheran Church  
St. Louis, MO  

Rev. David McDaniel, Senior Pastor  
Holmeswood Baptist Church  
Kansas City, MO  

Brittany McDonald-Null, Pastoral Resident  
First Baptist Church  
Columbia, MO  

Rev. Carol McEntyre, Senior Pastor  
First Baptist Church  
Columbia, MO  

Rev. Elsie McGrath, Priest/Pastor  
Roman Catholic Womenpriests (RCWP)  
Saint Louis, MO  

Rev. Polly McWilliams, Senior Pastor  
United Church of Christ  
Florissant, MO  

Rev. Dr. David Mehl, Co-Executive Director  
Interfaith Partnership of Greater St. Louis  
St. Louis, MO  

Rev. Bruce Moeller, Retired  
United Church of Christ  
St. Louis, MO  

Rev. Wes Mullins, Senior Pastor  
Metropolitan Community Church of Greater Saint Louis  
St. Louis, MO  

Rev. Dr. Michael Olmsted, Retired Pastor  
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship  
Springfield, MO  

Fr. Ralph Parthie, Recent Provincial Councilor  
OFM (Order of Friars Minor)  
Saint Louis, MO  

Rev. Margaret Philip, Pastor  
United Church of Christ  
Chesterfield, MO  

Mrs. Marilen Pittler, Board Member & Co-chair Human Trafficking Committee  
National Council of Jewish Women, St. Louis  
St. Louis, MO  

Rev. David Poe, Pastor  
United Church of Christ  
New Haven, MO
Donna Potts, Woman’s Mission Director
Fee Fee Baptist Church
Bridgeton, MO

Rev. Geraldine Proctor, Retired Pastor
United Church of Christ
St. Louis, MO

Sr. Jonella Rhoda, Retired
Sisters of Mercy
St. Louis, MO

V. J. Rhodes, Chair of Finance Committee
First Baptist Church
Columbia, MO

Ms. Karen Rogers, Lay Leader
Second Baptist Church
Liberty, MO

Rabbi Carnie Shalom Rose, Senior Rabbi
Congregation B’nai Amoona
St. Louis, MO

Cindy Rose, Lay Leader
Grace United Church of Christ
O’Fallon, MO

Rev. Dr. Penny Ross-Corona, Regional Minister
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America
St. Louis, MO

Rev. Melvin Roy, Retired Pastor
American Baptist
Belton, MO

Barry Rudert, Lay Leader
Ladue Chapel Presbyterian Church
St. Louis, MO

Dr. Doyle Sager, Senior Pastor
First Baptist Church
Jefferson City, MO

Phil Salvati, Elder
First Presbyterian Church of St. Louis
St. Louis, MO

Ken Satterfield, Lay Leader
First Baptist Church
Jefferson City, MO

Ray Savage, Retired Pastor
Southern Baptist
Joplin, MO

Peggy Schaefer, Parish Ministry Associate
St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church
Ballwin, MO

Sr. Claudette Schiratti, Sister
Sisters of Mercy
Kansas City, MO

Sister Joan Schnorbus, Retired Senior Sister
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, O’Fallon, MO
O’Fallon, MO

Rev. King Schoenfeld, Assistant Pastor
Historic Trinity Lutheran
Saint Louis, MO

Rev. Roger Schomburg, Retired
Cooperative Baptist
St. Louis, MO

Rev. Albert Schon, Retired
Peace United Church of Christ
Webster Groves, MO

Dr. Allen Schwab, Former Adult Education Director
Jewish/Unitarian Universalist
Chesterfield, MO

Dr. Leroy Seat, Retired Deacon
Rainbow Mennonite Church, Kansas City, KS
Liberty, MO

Rabbi Scott Shafrin, Assistant Rabbi
Kol Rinah
St. Louis, MO
Rev. Susan Shumway, Chaplain
United Church of Christ
O'Fallon, MO

Rev. Dr. Gary Snowden, Associate Pastor
First Baptist Church Lee's Summit
Lee's Summit, MO

Rev. Dean Stewart, Retired Pastor
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Chesterfield, MO

Rev. Stephanie Swanson, Pastor
Crossroads Church
Kansas City, MO

Dr. Elaine Sweeney, Lector
Catholic
Florissant, MO

Rev. Rocky Tallent, Director of Pastoral Care
Sehealth
Cape Girardeau, MO

Mr. Paul Teverow, President, Board of Directors
United Hebrew Congregation
Joplin, MO

Ms. Jill Thompson, Music Director
ELCA
St. Louis, MO

W.B. Tichenor, Pastor
Little Bonne Femme Baptist Church
Columbia, MO

Deacon and Mrs. Alan and Patricia Trautwein, Deacon
Kirkwood Baptist Church
Kirkwood, MO

Sister Claudia Ward, Sisters of Mercy
St. Louis, MO

Ms. Brenda Waters, Deacon
Presbyterian Church
Jefferson City, MO

Rev. Donna Watts, Associate Pastor, Christian Education
Kirkwood Baptist Church
St. Louis, MO

Mr. Steven Whitlock, Deacon
First Baptist Church
Jefferson City, MO

Rev. Alfred Willowhawk, Pastor
Wite Rayvn Metaphysical Church, Wiccan
West Plains, MO

Rev. Sarah Wimberley, Lead Pastor
N. Blvd. United Methodist Church, President of Independence Ministerial Alliance
Independence, MO

Dr. Susan Young, Elder
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Columbia, MO

Dr. William Young, Professor of Religious Studies and Chaplain, Emeritus
Westminster College, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Fulton, MO

Gabino Zavala, Justice and Peace Director
Missionaries of the Precious Blood
Kansas City, MO