



The Office of the General Minister and President

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada

December 8, 2017

To: Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, Rep. Nancy Pelosi, and all members of the United States Congress

As leaders of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we are opposed to the proposal in the current version of the tax bill before Congress to revoke the Johnson Amendment. We believe that allowing religious nonprofits to engage in electoral politics would politicize religious nonprofits in a way that will do irreparable harm to our congregations and ministries. All people have a vested interest in preserving the independence and nonpartisanship of the charitable and philanthropic sectors.

Nonpartisanship is a cornerstone principle that has strengthened the public's trust of the charitable community, one of the few places we can come together as a society around shared values of service. And nonpartisan credibility is critical to the ability of 501(c)(3) organizations to work with elected officials of all parties at the local, state, and federal levels to address community needs.

The House version of the tax reform bill contains Section 5201, which would weaken the Johnson Amendment and would radically change the longstanding, vital protection for nonprofit nonpartisanship:

- Section 5201 would allow political operatives to pressure organizations to endorse or oppose candidates.
- It would allow donors to exert pressure by giving or threatening to withhold charitable contributions to force the organization to endorse or oppose candidates the donors prefer.
- The proposed change would also make political donations – for the first time ever – tax-deductible when funneled through charitable nonprofits, houses of worship, and foundations.

We strongly urge you to block this section from passage in the final version of the tax bill and allow us to maintain our historic neutral status as we work to bring resources to bear on issues of shared concern.

Sincerely,



Rev. Teresa Hord Owens

General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada



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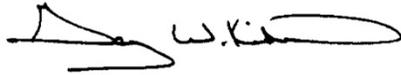
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