



# Supporting the Johnson Amendment

The “Johnson Amendment” protects our charitable sector, including houses of worship, from candidates seeking endorsements during political campaigns. Houses of worship and other 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations should not become cogs in the political machine or loopholes in campaign finance laws. Changing the law is **unnecessary**, **unwise** and **unwanted**.

## CHANGING THE LAW IS UNNECESSARY

**Houses of worship can already speak out on any political, social or moral issue. They just can't endorse or oppose candidates with tax-deductible dollars.**

- Current law protects political speech from the pulpit and other nonpartisan election activity by houses of worship.
- Current law does not prevent any member of the clergy (or other nonprofit leader) in their individual capacity from endorsing or opposing any candidate for any office, donating to any political campaign or running for any elected office.

## CHANGING THE LAW IS UNWISE

**The tax code preserves the nonpartisan character of our entire charitable sector.**

- Current law applies to all 501(c)(3) organizations and is not targeting churches or pastors.
- Current law protects the reputation of the charitable sector as a place to come together and solve problems, no matter who holds the levers of political power.

**Tying churches to partisan elections diminishes their ability to speak prophetically as political outsiders and threatens their independence.**

- As Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in *Strength to Love*: “The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state.”
- Opening the door to partisan electoral activity by houses of worship could lead to increased regulation and IRS scrutiny of their affairs.

**Taxpayers and the integrity of our campaign system are protected when tax-deductible contributions are made for tax-deductible purposes, not funneled for partisan activities.**

- Changing the law would incentivize candidates and partisan groups to use congregations for partisan campaign activities.
- Houses of worship could be turned into virtual political action committees (PACs), providing an irresistible

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loophole for some to deduct campaign contributions by funneling them through houses of worship. This would be a step backward for campaign finance reform and risk the good name of houses of worship.

## CHANGING THE LAW IS UNWANTED

### **Changing the law to allow 501(c)(3) organizations, including houses of worship, to endorse candidates is deeply unpopular.**

- Worshipers in the pew do not need or want religious leaders telling them how to vote or funneling tithes to the coffers of political parties.
- Congregations would be divided along political lines, deepening divisions within and among our religious communities.
- More than 4,000 faith leaders sent a letter to Congress in August asking to keep the current law, noting that it strikes the right balance. You can read their letter at **Faith-Voices.org**.
- Almost 5,500 nonprofits are asking to keep the current law. You can read their letter at **GiveVoice.org**.
- In April, 99 national and state religious bodies joined together to tell Congress that they do not need or want a change in the law to pursue their religious mission. Read their letter and learn more online at **BJCOnline.org/CommunityNotCandidates**.
- *2016 LifeWay Research Poll*: 79% of Americans say it is inappropriate for pastors to publicly endorse political candidates during a church service.
- *2017 National Association of Evangelicals Poll*: 89% of evangelical leaders say pastors should not endorse politicians from the pulpit.
- *2017 Independent Sector Poll*: 72% of Americans favor the “Johnson Amendment,” which further breaks down into 66% of Trump voters, 78% of Clinton voters, 67% of Republican voters, 76% of Democratic voters, and 77% of independent voters.
- *2017 Public Religion Research Institute Poll*: 71% of Americans and all major religious groups in the country oppose allowing churches to endorse political candidates while retaining their tax-exempt status.