

Separation of Church and State

Oppose Efforts to Weaken the Johnson Amendment

The President and some members of Congress are currently seeking to repeal or undermine the Johnson Amendment, a law that bars charitable nonprofits, including houses of worship, from engaging in partisan, election-related activities, such as funding political campaigns or endorsing candidates for public office. The law has protected the integrity and independence of non-profit organizations, including houses of worship, for more than six decades.

The separation of religion and state is of utmost importance to JCPA. Our long-standing policy is that houses of worship, like all charitable institutions, must not engage in partisan political campaign activity. Gutting enforcement mechanisms would allow candidates and donors to press houses of worship for their endorsements, transforming America's houses of worship into partisan political operations.

JCPA is working in coalition with other faith-based groups to oppose any efforts to repeal or weaken the Amendment. This includes gathering thousands of signatures from faith leaders around the country as part of a new interfaith initiative, [Faith Voices](#), of which JCPA is an original sponsor.

- **Oppose any legislative proposals that seek to undermine or repeal the Johnson Amendment.** If enacted, such legislative proposals would politicize charitable nonprofits, houses of worship, and foundations, plunging them into caustic partisanship and preventing them from fulfilling their core mission of serving the community and performing good works. We call on members to oppose:
 - [H.R. 172](#), which would completely repeal the “no partisan politicking” provision, subjecting nonprofits to demands/requests to get involved in partisan political electioneering, including using charitable, religious, and foundation assets to make political donations.
 - [S.264](#) and [H.R. 781](#), which would substantially weaken the law by allowing leaders of individual 501(c)(3) entities to endorse candidates for public office and engage in some partisan electioneering activities.
- **Charities and nonprofits can only be successful if the public trusts our integrity and commitment to fulfilling our mission to serve the community.** Weakening the Johnson Amendment would corrode that trust. Americans are fed up with hyper-partisanship, and view their houses of worship and charitable nonprofits as safe havens where they can escape the acrimony and division. Even subtle pressure could force nonprofits to divert charitable funds away from their community work in favor of partisan activities.
- **Undermining the Johnson Amendment would force taxpayers to subsidize the political campaign activities of houses of worship and other nonprofits.** They would essentially be compelled to donate charitable resources (such as money, staff, facilities, member lists, and fundraising ability—as well as their brand value) to partisan political campaigns.

- **Contributions for purely political purposes, currently not deductible, could be “laundered” through donations to charities.** Because charities are not required to disclose the names of their donors to the public, these proposals undermine public confidence in America’s charities, as well as the political process.
- **Charities and nonprofits already have a range of election-related activities in which they can engage.** This includes but is not limited to holding candidate or issue forums, participating in voter drives, and publishing nonpartisan voting records.

For more information, read the [Jewish Federations of North America’s backgrounder, “Protect the Integrity of Charitable Organizations: Oppose Efforts to Repeal or Rollback the Johnson Amendment.”](#)