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Johnson Amendment Survives Tax Bill – a (Temporary) Victory for Nonprofits, Foundations and Houses of Worship

Lexington, Ky. – Nonprofits breathed a collective sigh of relief this morning as they learned that the Johnson Amendment, an important provision in the current tax code that prohibits charitable organizations from endorsing candidates for political office, survived a repeal threat.

The language was stricken from the final version of the tax reform bill last night. During deliberations in the Senate late Thursday, the chamber's parliamentarian blocked language that would have repealed the provision prohibiting electioneering by 501 (c)(3) nonprofits since 1954.

"While the final tax bill set to be revealed in the coming days will contain a litany of provisions that threaten the nonprofit sector's ability to effectively serve Kentuckians and enhance the quality of life in our communities, this news means that nonprofits will be able to operate free from partisan politics, 'dark money,' and tax-deductible political contributions – at least for now," said Danielle Clore, executive director/CEO of Kentucky Nonprofit Network (KNN). "Nonprofits have worked for decades to gain the trust of donors and this represents a significant win for the integrity of nonprofits, houses of worship and foundations across the nation."

For months, KNN activated its members to connect with Kentucky's Congressional delegation to express their concerns. "As I've traveled across Kentucky in recent weeks, the concerns of our members are significant. The decreased tax incentive to make gifts to charity as a result of doubling the standard deduction and the cuts expected to offset the cost of tax reform mean fewer dollars for these vital organizations to meet community needs," said Clore. "Couple that with Kentucky's own budget woes, and organizations are rightfully alarmed at what the result will mean for Kentuckians and our communities."

Clore praised Kentucky's nonprofits for their unified and resounding voice on the repeal efforts and also noted that the fight to protect the Johnson Amendment is far from over – "nonprofits can pause briefly to celebrate this victory, but we will need to continue to remind Congress that the majority of nonprofits, houses of worship and foundations oppose all efforts to politicize our organizations and hamper our ability to focus on our missions."

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Kentucky Nonprofit Network is the state association of nonprofit organizations working to strengthen and advance Kentucky's nonprofit community. Celebrating fifteen years of service to the sector, KNN provides nonprofit organizations with a unified public policy voice, professional development opportunities and resources, and member benefits.

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