

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.

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