

November 16, 2017

Members of the California Congressional Delegation
US Congress
Washington, DC 20510

REF: Repealing the Johnson Amendment Would Allow Dark Money to Surge into Churches

Dear Members of the California Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of Equality California, an organization of 800,000 members whose mission is to bring the voices of LGBTQ people and allies to institutions of power, we strongly urge you to reject any effort to repeal of Johnson Amendment -- whether it is embedded in the tax bill or in the FY2018 Financial Services and General Government appropriations bill for the Internal Revenue Service.

The 1954 Johnson amendment prohibits 501(c)(3) nonprofits, including houses of worship, from endorsing or opposing political candidates or parties but permits them to host candidate forums, hold voter registration drives, urge congregants to vote, and transport people to the polls.

This careful balance has stood the test of time for the past 60 years, as evidenced by polls indicating that nearly 80% of the public and most faith leaders oppose a repeal of the Johnson Amendment because they do not wish their churches to become partisan tools nor their congregations be roiled by politics.

But President Trump's vow to "totally destroy" the Johnson Amendment would go far beyond simply allowing religious leaders to endorse specific candidates or political parties from the pulpit. Its real harm lies in the near-certainty that billionaire donors would shift their anti-LGBTQ, anti-women and anti-equality political activities to churches in order to skirt campaign contribution disclosure laws because 501(c)(3) nonprofits are not required to identify their donors.

Anonymous political "dark money" flowing into churches would be funneled directly into politics and allow their donors to receive a charitable tax deduction.

The Supreme Court's decision in the *Citizens United* case unleashed a tsunami of dark money by corporations into America's political system. Untraceable

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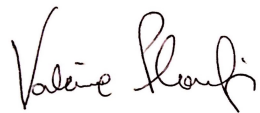
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campaign money subverts democracy and makes a mockery of President Trump's promise to "drain the swamp." Repealing the Johnson Amendment would be an open invitation to taxpayer-funded discrimination and we urge you to reject it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Zbur".

Rick Zbur
Executive Director
Equality California

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Valerie Ploumpis".

Valerie Ploumpis
National Policy Director
Equality California

cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein
cc: Senator Kamala Harris