



Protecting America's Strong Tradition of Giving

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Nonprofit Leaders to Lawmakers: Now is a Critical Time for Charitable Giving

WASHINGTON, D.C.— More than 200 nonprofit leaders from across the nation representing a diverse group of charities gathered on Capitol Hill today to urge lawmakers and their staffs to protect charitable giving in America as part of the Charitable Giving Coalition's (CGC) "100 Years of Giving Fly-in."

"Today has been a great opportunity for our coalition members to engage members of Congress and their staffs about the importance of the charitable deduction and its positive impact on the people and communities served by the charitable sector. It opens a welcomed dialogue," said Jason Lee, interim president and CEO of the Association of Fundraising Professionals and chair of the CGC.

"This is a critical time for the nonprofit sector. Congress is poised to undertake the largest re-write of the tax code in over 30 years and whatever lawmakers ultimately do this year could have an enormous effect on charitable giving in this country," said Michael Kenyon, president and CEO of the National Association of Charitable Gift Planners. "I hear from my members everyday who want to make sure their voice is being heard in DC and that we as an organization are doing everything we can to help shape any changes to the law."

Coalition members advocated for maintaining the full scope and value of the charitable deduction, as well as its possible expansion, such as an incentive for taxpayers who do not itemize their deductions.

"I think the meetings have gone well. Generally, everyone understands the impact of the charitable sector on the nation, which is a good thing. There are tax proposals out there that will almost certainly reduce charitable giving in the United States. So, they seemed really open to our discussions of expanding the charitable deduction," said Jim Cooper, president and CEO of United Ways of the Pacific Northwest.

"We are here to be a resource as the discussions around tax reform unfold. We want to help lawmakers understand the impact of how decisions they make may trigger something else that needs to be addressed; because we all agree that we need to

preserve the full value of the charitable deduction, if not expand it,” said Maggie Osborn, chief strategy officer at the Forum of Regional Association of Grantmakers.

2017 marks the 100th anniversary of the charitable tax deduction. The CGC is urging lawmakers to recognize this remarkable milestone and preserve this tax incentive that encourages individuals to give away more of their income, investing it in their communities. The “100 Years of Giving Fly-in” served as a kick-off for the CGC’s work during the 115th Congress. Participants from 37 states met with more than 125 House and Senate offices, including 52 meetings with members of Congress who serve on the tax writing committees.

“The offices have been very receptive on both sides of the aisle with a good dialogue back and forth,” said Russell Johnson, executive director of the Idaho-based Development Workshop Foundation. “For Idaho, it’s been a great day because we had meetings with both members of the House and both senators. So, we have hit all of Idaho’s delegation in Washington.”

Giving USA reported that Americans contributed more than \$265 billion to charities in 2015. Over 80 percent of those dollars are given by taxpayers who itemize and use the charitable deduction. As lawmakers are drafting tax reform legislation, several provisions have been proposed that alter this valuable tax incentive in ways that could significantly reduce charitable giving.

“The notion of an above-the-line, or universal, charitable deduction is one that has come up in many of the meetings that we have conducted. I think lawmakers are open to it and I think some are often surprised to hear that when you triple the standard deduction the number of itemizers would be so greatly reduced. So, I think meetings like these are critically important to ensure that these issues are put on the radar of members of Congress,” said Chris Gates, executive vice president of external affairs at the Council on Foundations.

Research confirms that, regardless of income level, taxpayers who receive a deduction for their contributions give more to charities than those that do not receive a deduction. Expanding a tax incentive to all taxpayers could increase overall charitable giving in America. It might also offset any declines in charitable giving resulting from any inherent uncertainty created by tax reform.

The CGC is dedicated to preserving a charitable giving incentive that ensures that our nation’s charities receive the funds necessary to fulfill their essential philanthropic missions. It is a unique, unified voice of more than 175 organizations representing a broad cross-section of nonprofit organizations from across the country. The mission-driven work of the broad patchwork of human service and health care organizations, educational institutions, faith-based organizations, associations, arts and cultural institutions, private and community foundations and other public interest serving organizations that make up the charitable sector is vital to our economy and society.

The CGC formed in 2009 in response to proposals by the Obama Administration and members of Congress to limit the tax deduction for charitable contributions. As Congress and the Trump Administration contemplate comprehensive tax reform, the CGC remains a relevant, constructive voice.

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