

# **THE CHARITABLE GIVING COALITION**

## *Protecting America's Strong Tradition of Giving*

November 14, 2012

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Office of the Democratic Leader  
H-204 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-0100

Dear Congresswoman Pelosi:

As Congress takes up tax reform, deficit reduction and the fiscal cliff, we urge you and House leaders not to impose any limits or caps to the charitable deduction. The Charitable Giving Coalition, representing a broad cross-section of nonprofit organizations across the country, requests an opportunity to brief you and your staff on the impact a proposed reduction to the charitable deduction would have on those we serve.

America's economic recovery requires a strong philanthropic sector, whose role as an investor in innovation and supporter of safety net services is more important than ever for a faster, sustainable economic recovery. This is particularly true as local, state and federal budgets decline and nonprofits continue to suffer the consequences of America's recession – increased demand for services with significantly fewer resources to get the job done.

Now is the time to maintain incentives to support the crucial work of the nonprofit sector – developing medications, improving education and health, protecting the environment, creating jobs, and enhancing arts and culture.

Nonprofits and charitable organizations supported through the generosity of millions of Americans have been crucial during times of crisis, particularly in the wake of natural disasters like Hurricane Sandy. As you can imagine, any cap or limitation on charitable deductions undermines charitable giving and would have long-lasting negative consequences.

Additionally, nonprofits generate \$1.1 trillion every year in the form of jobs and services. One in 10 U.S. workers is employed by the nonprofit sector, which provides 13.5 million jobs, or approximately 10 percent of the country's workforce. Employees of nonprofit organizations received roughly 9 percent of wages paid in the U.S. in 2009, and the nonprofit sector paid \$668 billion in wages and benefits to its employees.

The charitable deduction is different than other itemized deductions in that it encourages individuals to give away a portion of their income to those in need. It rewards a selfless act, and it encourages taxpayers to give more to charities than they would otherwise have given. Data suggests that for every dollar a donor gets in tax relief for his or her donation, the public typically receives three dollars of benefit. No other tax provision generates that kind of positive public impact.

In 2011, individuals gave nearly \$300 billion to support charitable causes, according to Giving USA. Much of that is claimed as a charitable deduction by millions of taxpayers each year, meaning they are not subjected to federal income taxes on money they give away to charities. Higher income taxpayers account for the majority of individual giving. According to a recent Congressional Budget Office report on the tax treatment of charitable giving, tax filers who reported an adjusted gross income of at least \$100,000 in 2008 were responsible for well over half (about 58 percent) of all charitable giving by taxpayers.

People give to worthwhile causes for many reasons—incentives such as tax deductions being among them. Tax incentives make more and larger gifts possible, and they do have an impact on donors. A recent 2012 study found that 33 percent of donors surveyed would reduce their giving if the charitable deduction did not exist. A survey conducted earlier this year showed three out of four Americans say they do not favor cutting, capping or limiting the charitable tax deduction.

Tax policy experts have also noted that charitable giving is more sensitive to tax changes compared to other deductible payments such as local taxes and mortgage interest because taxpayers generally cannot adjust or modify their local taxes or mortgage payments. However, taxpayers can adjust their levels of charitable contributions quite easily in response to tax code changes.

As you continue to work through 2012 and prepare for the next Congress, we urge you to protect the current charitable deduction to promote a vibrant charitable sector and the benefits the sector provides to the economy and the American public. That's why the Charitable Giving Coalition is speaking out to protect a 100-year old American tradition of giving back and strengthening communities.

We will be in touch soon to confirm a date and time to meet with you and your staff to discuss the unique value of the charitable deduction. We look forward to continuing to work with you to strengthen the impact of nonprofits in communities throughout America and the millions of people who depend on their programs and services.

Sincerely,

Association of Fundraising Professionals, Chair  
Alliance for Charitable Reform  
Alliance for Children and Families  
Alliance of Nonprofit Mailers  
American Alliance of Museums  
American Institute for Cancer Research  
American Red Cross  
American Society of Association Executives  
Association of Gospel Rescue Missions  
Association for Healthcare Philanthropy  
Association of Direct Response Fundraising Counsel  
Association of Art Museum Directors  
Council for Advancement and Support of Education  
Council for American Private Education  
The Council on Foundations  
DMA Nonprofit Federation

Dunham+Company  
ECFA  
Educational Media Foundation  
Goodwill Industries International  
Independent Sector  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
League of American Orchestras  
National Association of Independent Schools  
The National Catholic Development Conference  
Partnership for Philanthropic Planning  
The Philanthropy Roundtable  
The Salvation Army  
Theatre Communications Group  
United Neighborhood Centers of America  
United Way Worldwide  
Volunteers of America  
YMCA of the USA