

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS
Press Release 730**

**GOOD NEWS FOR CHRISTMAS:
THE JOHNSON AMENDMENT IN THE UNITED STATES HAS
SURVIVED**

Americans don't want houses of worship to become enmeshed in partisan politics. Australians should follow their example

The Johnson Amendment is a provision in the current American tax code that ensures all tax-exempt organizations, including houses of worship, do not endorse candidates. Tax-exempt organizations can all speak out on social and political issues, they just can't take sides in partisan elections.

After a months-long fight, church-state separationists have good news: The final tax bill that the US House and Senate voted on may have given enormous tax breaks to wealthy corporations but it will NOT contain language to repeal the Johnson Amendment.

Americans don't want houses of worship to become enmeshed in partisan politics.

This makes sense. Tax-exempt status is provided to non-profits because they do charitable work, and electoral politics is not charitable work. But the Johnson Amendment also protects the integrity and independence of charitable non-profits and houses of worship. No one wants charities and houses of worship to be torn apart by partisan campaign politics.

On the campaign trail, Donald J. Trump vowed to “*get rid of and totally destroy the Johnson Amendment.*” And in March, the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, U.S. Rep. Kevin Brady (R-Texas) promised to repeal the Johnson Amendment in his tax bill. All the while, Americans United continued their decades-long fight to protect the current law. They spent countless hours educating members of Congress and the public as well as organizing faith leaders and supporters.

Through the [Faith-Voices project](#), of Americans United for Separation of Church and State 4,300 faith leaders stood up and spoke out in favor of keeping the Johnson Amendment. And more than 10,000 of their activists urged Congress to protect the current law through calls, emails and petitions. Many of

their faith leaders and supporters around the country also wrote op-eds and held in-district meetings with their members of Congress. As efforts to pass a tax bill played out, the Senate and House versions were at odds: the House bill contained language to essentially repeal the Johnson Amendment, but the Senate bill was silent on the issue. The two chambers of Congress have been working to find agreement on what the final bill will look like and the final bill has just passed into law.

The office of U.S. Sen. On 14 December, Ron Wyden (D-Oregon) confirmed that the Johnson Amendment language will *not* be in the final bill.

This is a huge win, and we in Australia as well as Christians and atheists in America should take a moment to celebrate. But then we have to get back to fighting to protect the Johnson Amendment. After Congress passes the tax bill, it will move on to spending bills. And the House has been pushing to weaken the ability of the Internal Revenue Service to enforce the Johnson Amendment through its spending bills. American United will continue to watch for that and will let their members know when they need to speak out again.

<https://www.au.org/blogs/wall-of-separation/the-johnson-amendment-has-survived-thanks-to-you>

**LISTEN TO THE DOGS PROGRAM
ON 3CR**

855 ON THE AM DIAL: 12.00 NOON SATURDAYS