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Need to Know This Week

Keep up with how the nonprofit world is responding to what's happening in Washington — and how leaders are planning for an uncertain future.

JULY 31, 2025

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From: Need to Know This Week
Subject: Leaders Implore Trump to Keep Politics Out of the Nonprofit Sector

Good afternoon,

What you need to know this week: calls for 501(c)(3) nonpartisanship, more emergency grants from foundations, Darren Walker is worried about American democracy, and more.

—Tamara Straus, senior editor

ROD LAMKEY/CNP/ALAMY

1. Nonprofits Press Trump to Keep Politics Out of Church

- **Serving without political interference:** A coalition of nonprofits and faith-based groups on Wednesday implored the Trump administration to keep politics out of houses of worship, warning the White House that allowing political endorsements by religious leaders "would jeopardize the integrity of the entire nonprofit community," reports Alex Daniels in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*.
- **Upholding the Johnson Amendment:** Led by the National Council of Nonprofits, more than 1,000 organizations have signed a letter to the president asking that he uphold the Johnson Amendment, a 70-year-old law that prohibits politicking by tax-exempt religious organizations. "This is not a matter of religious freedom or speech," the letter states. "It is about fundamentally reshaping how political money flows through our system"
- **Pivotal case:** The law was dealt a blow on July 7 when the Internal Revenue Service said it would not enforce the amendment in a case two churches and the National Religious Broadcasters brought against the agency, challenging the constitutionality of the amendment on free speech, free exercise of religion, and due process grounds.

2. More Funder Support as Federal Cuts Deepen

- **Strategy shift:** Foundations are changing their spending strategies, particularly for groups affected by Trump administration policy changes, reports Stephanie Beasley in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*.
- **Crisis brewing:** The Latino Community Foundation, for example, disbursed more than $7 million to nonprofits this year — its highest midyear grant total ever. "The administration's withdrawal of support for health-care access and sustainability initiatives and investments in things like fair housing will have such a bad effect on communities out there that even more robust nonprofit work won't be able to make up for it," said Julián Castro, the philanthropy's CEO.
- **Local giving:** Community foundations and philanthropies that give locally have been active. The Meyer Foundation and the Greater Washington Community Foundation have been providing bridge grants to nonprofits facing severe funding losses since January. And the Boston Foundation has delivered more than $2.6 million in "safety-net" grants and expects to provide more emergency grants for causes such as food security and community health centers.

3. Darren Walker Is Worried About Democracy

- **Hope, regret, disorientation:** Darren Walker's book of essays and speeches, *The Idea of America,* drops September 3, and the outgoing Ford Foundation president is trying to be optimistic — but it isn't easy, reports James Pollard in the Associated Press. In an interview, Walker says he has hope for the nation but also concern for its diminishing democracy. He called the Trump administration's first six months "disorienting" for a sector he encouraged to adopt more just funding practices.
- **Limits of philanthropy: "**The past 12 years have been both exhilarating and exhausting. Exhilarating because there's never been a more exciting time to be in philanthropy. And exhausting because the political, socioeconomic dynamics of the last 12 years are very worrisome for our future," Walker said. "Philanthropy can play a role in helping to strengthen our democracy. But philanthropy can't save America."

4. Big Gifts and the New Tax Law

- **Boom now, bust later?** High-earners may make big gifts in 2025, but their giving may decline next year, reports the *Chronicle*'s Basheeda Childress. Fundraising experts say donors have an incentive to make their big gifts this year to avoid the 35 percent cap on charitable deductions in the new tax bill, which goes into effect in January.
- **Multiyear pledges:** "We're talking to our clients right now about making sure their donors are aware of this if they're involved in a multiyear pledge," said Laura MacDonald, founder of the Benefactor Group, a fundraising consultancy. "Because donors may want to accelerate their '26 payments and make them in '25 when they can take full advantage of the existing 100 percent deduction."

5. Also Worth Your Time …

- **Climate nonprofits scramble and organize:** From clean energy and research to advocacy, nonprofit groups are struggling to survive as federal dollars from the Inflation Reduction Act dry up, reports Bloomberg. But a new coalition of nonprofits and academia is stepping up to salvage U.S. climate programs, reports the *MIT Technology Review*.
- **$20 million pledged to grassroots movements:** Mission Telecom, a nonprofit telecommunications provider that delivers affordable broadband, launched Wednesday a $20 million, five-year unrestricted grant program to support 50-plus nonprofits in multiracial democracy, movement building, and digital access.
- **No 'legislative punishment' for Planned Parenthood:** A federal judge indefinitely blocked the Trump administration from enforcing a policy that would prevent many Planned Parenthood clinics from receiving federal Medicaid reimbursements if they continue to offer abortion services, reports the *New York Times*. The judge found that the policy created unreasonable pressure on individual clinics — including some that may not offer abortion services — because of their association with the larger Planned Parenthood network.

Quote of the Week

"It's no silver bullet, but it's one piece of the shift toward democratizing giving. Finally, our government is saying that all giving levels are valuable — not just those gifts coming from higher-income people."

— Shannon McCracken, president of the Nonprofit Alliance, in the *Chronicle*'s "Will the New $2,000 Tax Break Bring Back Everyday Donors?"

If you have any tips for this newsletter, email us.

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