**SAMPLE LETTER TO MEMBER OF CONGRESS**

**RE: PLEASE CO-SPONSOR HR 2290, “VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION PROTECTION ACT OF 2015”**

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The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, M.C.
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

On behalf of Lions Clubs International and similarly situated volunteer/service organizations in your local district, I ask that you consider co-sponsoring H.R. 2290: Volunteer Organization Protection Act of 2015, sponsored by Representative, Steve Chabot, of Ohio. The bill amends the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 to expand liability protections to volunteer nonprofit organizations for harm caused by an act or omission of a volunteer on behalf of the organization.

The bill prohibits such liability protections from applying if the organization: (1) would be liable under laws governing the direct or vicarious liability of organizations, and (2) expressly authorized the specific conduct constituting the act or omission. The bill also bars such an organization from liability for harm caused by the organization, or a volunteer acting on its behalf, if the act of omission was at the request of, or pursuant to an authorization by, the federal government, a state government, or another governmental subdivision, provided that:

1. the requesting or authorizing governmental entity would have been immune from suit or from liability in damages if the entity had engaged in the act or omission itself or through an employee, agent, or independent contractor; or
2. any governmental employee, agent, or contractor who had engaged in the act or omission on behalf of the requesting or authorizing governmental entity would have been immune from suit or from liability in damages by virtue of immunity extended to individual governmental actors.

Lastly, the bill prohibits punitive damages from being awarded against a volunteer nonprofit organization for the actions of a volunteer within the scope of the volunteer’s responsibilities to the organization unless the claimant establishes by clear and convincing evidence that the organization itself expressly authorized the volunteer’s actions with a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed.

Absent legislative reform, we risk creating a chilling effect that limits the capacity of nonprofit organizations to recruit and mobilize volunteers. Local nonprofit organizations symbolize the fundamental beliefs and democratic principles of American civic-society by addressing social problems and community needs. By offering an organizational vehicle for citizens to volunteer and participate in their communities, nonprofits also provide opportunities to build social capital, or the bonds of cooperation, that can exist among community members. Social capital can then promote thriving communities and more effective governance.

Please consider the merits of the bill as it protects and honors the great charitable work of millions of volunteers and their local governments. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Name
Address
Phone Number (optional)