

IRE Board Email Vote to Amend Donor Policy
April 10, 2024

On Wednesday, April 3, Treasurer Mark Greenblatt shared the following message via email to the board:

At our last meeting, we adopted a [new donor policy](#) after many months of thoughtful deliberation. This policy reflects our unwavering commitment to independence and board oversight on donations, a testament to our collective diligence, while expanding our potential donor list.

However, the policy's current stance on anonymous donations — specifically, **"IRE does not accept donations from sources whose identity is not known to the organization"** — merits further discussion. As you know, former IRE Executive Director Mark Horvit raised this issue shortly before the board meeting, after it was distributed prior to our February meeting. He noted that the new policy would stop our acceptance of money we had been able to take before— and that the new policy would bar us from taking money from managed funds (who's true sources we might not know) and wealthy individuals simply seeking privacy— who don't want to be bothered by professional fundraisers who might see their name on our website.

In our efforts to address these freshly raised concerns, we proposed amendments during the meeting itself— aimed at refining our approach to anonymous donations. Despite the robust discussions that followed, we chose as a board to avoid voting on any amendments to address these concerns, and instead we prioritized the adoption of the new policy as it was distributed originally— which had been months in the making. That was a smart decision, but we left an important part of our work unfinished.

In an industry where financial support is increasingly challenging to secure, it's imperative we revisit this matter, and finish our consideration promptly. Brian and I believe that a policy adjustment needs to be made allowing the acceptance of **truly unrestricted donations**, even from anonymous sources. The concern that was raised in the meeting was apprehension about future revelations regarding a donors' identity— if they are someone like a Jeffrey Epstein, for example. The heart of our proposal, however, lies in the confidence we have in our board and executive leadership to judiciously reject

or return donations that they might learn at a future date conflict with IRE's values or reputation. The policy we passed in February, importantly, says this:

“IRE’s Board of Directors, in consultation with the staff executive leadership team, may reject or return donations from sources that, in their opinion, do not align with IRE’s values, might create an appearance of bias or conflict of interest, or whose acceptance would meaningfully damage the reputation of the organization.”

Notably: The majority of anonymous donors, often motivated by a desire to avoid solicitation rather than obscure nefarious intentions, would offer support that is both unrestricted and aligned with our mission. We are in total control of how the money would be spent- not them (we don't even know who they are!). Should we encounter a controversial donor in the future if their name surfaces, our existing policy grants us the flexibility to act in IRE's best interest, whether that means returning the donation or repurposing it to further our mission.

Therefore, I am proposing a motion that I hope we adopt over email – to amend our donor policy to:

- Include this provision: ***“IRE may accept gifts for unrestricted support from sources whose identity is unknown to the organization, provided staff informs the Board and the Finance Committee 15 days prior to acceptance.”***
- Remove this provision: *“IRE does not accept donations from sources whose identity is not known to the organization”*
- Add the two bolded words here: *“IRE will publish a list of all of the individuals and organizations that **it knows** have donated \$10,000 or more in cash or any other item of value. It will allow for anonymity only in cases approved by the Finance Committee.”*

This amendment aims to balance the need for financial support with our commitment to transparency and ethical integrity. By keeping the Board and Finance Committee informed, we ensure both oversight and flexibility in our fundraising efforts. We believe these changes will strengthen our ability to support IRE's mission while maintaining the trust and accountability that define our organization. Thank you for considering this motion. Your dedication to our cause is deeply appreciated.

President Brian Rosenthal and Vice President Josh Hinkle replied to discuss when the board would vote on the proposal to allow time for discussion over email. With Greenblatt, they decided to give directors two more days to weigh in. Rosenthal also expressed his support for the motion.

On Friday, April 5, after no board members had requested the vote take place during the next meeting, Josh Hinkle seconded the motion and voted yes.

The motion passed unanimously 13-0 with members voting via email by Wednesday, April 10.