



Missouri Christian Coalition

Q & A TRANSCRIPT FROM THE VIDEO: "FROM THE PEWS TO THE PRECINCTS"

Jay Sekulow, Chief Counsel for the American Center for Law & Justice with Randy Tate, Executive Director of Christian Coalition. (Randy Tate = Q & Jay Sekulow = A)

Q. May churches sponsor voter registration drives in the churches?

A. Absolutely, the church may sponsor non-partisan voter drives in the church at any time. Look at the black civil rights movement in the 50's and 60's. The initial voter registration of blacks was done in black churches. There have been no problems with that whatsoever.

Q. May churches distribute information regarding pending legislation?

A. Yes, there's a lot of misunderstanding about this issue. The churches' voice is not supposed to be silent about the moral issues of the day. I think the church not only is obligated to speak out on those issues but to do it with moral force. There is nothing in the IRS code that prohibits the church from talking about these issues and addressing these issues. Churches MAY distribute materials such as legislative action alerts, ballot initiatives, and voting records of elected officials

Q. What about ballot measures such as state initiatives and referendums? Can they endorse those initiatives?

A. Absolutely. Churches MAY devote an insubstantial part of their total resources toward affecting public policy at all levels, including ballot initiatives

Q. When an initiative such as abortion is to be on the ballot may a church discuss and participate in influencing the outcome?

A. Absolutely appropriate to be involved in it.

Q. May churches host a candidate forum in the church?

A. Absolutely appropriate. Churches cannot endorse a candidate for public office but churches MAY sponsor a candidate forum if it is **non-partisan** and **all** candidates are invited to participate. There are **no** IRS restrictions there. A church cannot endorse or oppose a candidate but a pastor or member can. When the IRS says that a church cannot endorse or oppose a candidate, it does not mean a pastor or member cannot. The free speech rights of a pastor or member still apply. Your constitutional rights are not surrendered when you enter your church.

Q. May pastors encourage their congregations from the pulpit to go vote in an election?

A. Pastors MAY use their pulpits to encourage people in their congregations to go vote. They would be derelict in their duties not to do so. Jesus said Christians are to be salt and light. To be salt & light, Christians must be involved in the political process.

Q. Pastors can not only encourage their congregations to vote but also to be involved in civil government?

A. Absolutely.

Q. Is it OK to distribute Christian Coalition non-partisan voter guides?

A. Absolutely appropriate. Non-partisan voter guides MAY be distributed in churches during all church activities. The CC voter guides meet all guidelines the IRS has put out and to deny distribution of them would be censorship. In reality those non-partisan voter guides are protected under the First Amendment free speech clause. The IRS has **not** revoked the tax-exempt status of a church for handing out non-partisan voter guides. Pastors MAY use their title when discussing or endorsing candidates as long as it is clear that the church is not endorsing or opposing the candidate...that it is not an official church action. Pastors still have freedom of speech. The first amendment applies.