

LEGAL DO'S AND DON'TS FOR CHURCHES/PASTORS

What Churches May Do

- Conduct non-partisan voter registration/education drives
- Distribute candidate surveys, incumbent voting record and non-partisan voter guides
- Distribution in church parking lot of political statements and opinions on political issues (so long as no church endorsement)
- Educate members of the public about viewpoints of candidates
- Rent (at market value) or loan a church mailing list to a candidate.
- Publish church newsletter/bulletin political ads at regular price and news stories
- Publish church newsletter/bulletin editorial regarding political issues or two different members taking opposing views on a candidate
- Introduce or invite a political candidate to preach or read Scripture – contributions cannot be solicited and members of the congregation cannot be urged to vote for a particular candidate.
- Support or oppose judicial, department, cabinet or other non-elected political appointments
- Discuss church doctrine pertaining to candidate views on abortion, homosexuality, marriage
- Use of church facilities by political candidates (if all candidates are invited or allowed)
- Petition drives supporting or opposing legislation or citizen initiatives

What Churches May Not Do

- Endorse or oppose political or judicial candidates
- Contribute to political candidates or political action committees
- Fund-raising or campaigning for political candidates.
- Church newsletter/bulletin editorial by pastor or staff endorsing or opposing a candidate
- Sell a political ad at a discount rate if no other advertisers are offered discounts.
- Distribute a candidate's political statements
- Pay to attend a caucus for a state or national political convention.
- Make in-kind or independent expenditures in favor of or against candidates.

BEING A PASTOR DOES NOT MEAN YOU GIVE UP YOUR RIGHTS

As private citizens, pastors have the same rights as all Americans. In endorsing or campaigning for any candidate, pastors should always make it clear that he is doing so as a private citizen and not as pastor of the church. Pastors' private funds, not church funds, can be used for such activities. Expressing personal opinions about candidates from the pulpit should be avoided. Pastors can preach sermons on social or political issues or activism and educate on the political process.