

NAE Leader Resigns After Backing Civil Unions

Richard Cizik, vice president for governmental affairs with the National Association of Evangelicals, resigned Thursday after expressing support for gay civil unions during a recent radio interview.



[] Richard Cizik, the longtime Washington lobbyist for the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), resigned Thursday after mentioning in a National Public Radio interview that he believed in civil unions for gay couples.

During a Dec. 2 interview on Terry Gross' *Fresh Air*, Cizik also said he supported Barak Obama during the Virginia primaries and was "shifting" on gay marriage: "I'm shifting, I have to admit. In other words, I would willingly say I believe in civil unions. I don't officially support redefining marriage from its traditional definition, I don't think."

In a letter to board members, NAE President Leith Anderson said Cizik's comments "did not appropriately represent the values and convictions of NAE and our constituents." Although Cizik apologized and affirmed the NAE's values, Anderson said there had been "a loss of trust in his credibility as a spokesperson among leaders and constituents."

Anderson said Cizik's resignation, which became effective immediately, was a mutual agreement. "But it was a reluctant mutuality," the *New York Times* reported. "He was reluctant to resign, and I was reluctant to see him resign."

Anderson added that the NAE's position "on marriage, abortion and other biblical values is long, clear and unchanged."

During Cizik's 28 years with the NAE, the organization, which represents 50 denominations with 450,000 churches, broadened its political agenda to oppose genocide in Darfur and promote

“creation care.” Because of Cizik’s advocacy against global warming, in 2007 two dozen prominent evangelicals, including Focus on the Family founder James Dobson, called on the NAE to silence or fire Cizik. They claimed he was using “the global warming controversy to shift the emphasis away from the great moral issues of our time”—abortion and sexual immorality.

“It was time for him to go,” Tom Minnery, a Focus on the Family senior vice president, told the Associated Press. “He no longer represents the view of evangelicalism. He has not represented those views for some time.”