

ADF Alleges State Attorney General Attempting to Intimidate Churches

Hawaii Attorney General Russell Suzuki sent a letter to churches in the Aloha state giving them “guidance” heading into the 2018 midterm elections. It’s something the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) says is really misleading.

“The news release seeks to silence churches and non-profit charitable organizations by inappropriately threatening their tax-exempt status if they speak about political issues during the upcoming election season,” an ADF news release states.

The AG’s news release says the office is offering guidance to churches, charities and non-profits so they don’t violate any federal or state laws on political campaign activity.

“Tax-exempt charitable organizations should know that they do not share the same legal rights to participate in political activity as individuals and other corporations,” the release stated. “Federal tax law specifically bars such organizations from participating or intervening in political campaigns on behalf of any candidate for public office.”

ADF Senior Counsel Erik Stanley wrote to Attorney General Suzuki expressing concern over his letter of guidance. He pointed out that a state attorney general doesn’t have the authority to enforce federal tax law.

“The fact that you released guidance on a law you have no authority or ability to enforce leads to the conclusion that the ‘guidance’ was nothing more than a tactic to intimidate houses of worship from speaking during this election season,” Stanley wrote.

He went on to say that the AG's letter focuses more on "what houses of worship cannot do than on what they have a constitutional and statutory right to do during an election season."

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