

More Pastors Plan to Preach Political Sermons

Pastors from more than 475 churches nationwide—nearly five times as many participants as last year—have committed to preach sermons that present biblical perspectives on the positions of electoral candidates.

In so doing, they will exercise their constitutionally protected right to free religious expression despite a problematic Internal Revenue Service rule that activist groups often use to silence churches.

“Pastors and churches shouldn’t live in fear of being punished or penalized by the government,” says Alliance Defense Fund Senior Legal Counsel Erik Stanley. “Churches should be allowed to decide for themselves what they want to talk about. The IRS should not be the one making the decision by threatening to revoke a church’s tax-exempt status. No government-recognized status can be conditioned upon the surrender of a constitutionally protected right. That’s why ADF started Pulpit Freedom Sunday: to get the government out of the pulpits of America.”

Pulpit Freedom Sunday is an event associated with the ADF Pulpit Initiative, a legal effort designed to secure the free speech rights of pastors in the pulpit. ADF hopes to eventually go to court to have the IRS rule known as the Johnson Amendment struck down as unconstitutional for its regulation of sermons, which are protected by the First Amendment.

A national phone survey conducted by ADF and LifeWay Research last month with 1,000 randomly drawn senior pastors found that nearly nine out of 10 Protestant pastors believe that the government should not regulate their sermons.

“The survey confirmed what pastors of nearly every persuasion have told us for years: they don’t want the IRS, or any other governmental agency, to censor what they say from their pulpits,” Stanley says.