

Pew Research: Very Few Churches Spoke Out About the Election

A shockingly low number of American churches actually spoke out about the candidates, the issues and even the Christian duty to vote ahead of this month's general election.

According to a new report released by Pew Research, "relatively few" Christian voters (14 percent) said information on political parties or candidates was made available to them in their places of worship, and even fewer (5 percent) said they were encouraged to vote in any particular way by their pastors or church elders.

Also, just 6 percent of Christians said they were contacted by a religious organization about the election.

With the exception of 2004, which Pew attributes evangelical engagement over the dearth of same-sex "marriage" ballot initiatives, these numbers are consistent with those seen in other presidential election years. The polling organization also points to a root cause of these results:

The First Amendment to the Constitution protects the right of churches and religious organizations to engage in political activity. But under current tax law, churches that endorse or actively aid political candidates can lose their federal tax-exempt status. This same tax law does not prohibit religious groups from discussing political issues—such as abortion or immigration—and expressing their preference for one policy position over another.

The "current tax law" Pew's report mentions is the so-called Johnson Amendment, named for then-Sen. Lyndon Johnson, who inserted the language after facing stiff opposition during his

campaigns from evangelical churches. Another issue, which has not yet been fully researched, is the impact the IRS's "targeting" scandal has had in chilling political activity by evangelical religious organizations. {eoa}