

# Atheist Coalition Targets Church Tax-Exempt Status

The Secular Coalition for America, a self-described alliance of “atheists, agnostics, humanists, freethinkers and other nontheistic Americans,” is taking direct aim at churches in America. The group is pushing a legislative proposal that would bring about radical changes to churches’ long-held tax-exempt status, including the possible forced disclosure of donors.

Even more disturbing, this push calls for direct government intrusion into the affairs of churches, something the Constitution forbids. The Supreme Court has long recognized that our constitutional system of government “has secured religious liberty from the invasion of the civil authority.”

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) recently developed a legal memo laying out, in detail, the dangers of this proposal:

*Such changes threaten the Free Exercise rights of every religious congregation in the Nation by the proposed precedential, unwarranted, and unbridled government intrusion into the religious affairs of churches. Specifically, putting the government in a position of authority over churches, by being able to grant or deny their tax exempt statuses, threatens the protections set forth in the Establishment Clause. Furthermore, such authority constitutes religious oppression because it places the government in the position to judge whether or not an institution’s beliefs constitute its claim as a church. To entertain such an inquiry into the internal affairs of a church would foster impermissible government entanglement with religion.*

If that isn’t scary enough, the memo also states, “The

Coalition's recommendation ignores the line between church and State and violates the Establishment Clause by suggesting the allowance of *severe government entanglement with religion through the IRS*" (emphasis added). The last thing we need right now is to give greater empowerment to the IRS to directly target churches.

The ACLJ is working with churches and members of Congress to ensure this dangerous and unconstitutional proposal is never passed into law or allowed to target and harass houses of worship in America.

You can read the full memo [here](#).