

California Megachurch Boosts Christian Voter Turnout Nationwide for 2024

In an effort to engage Christians in the political process, Calvary Chapel Chino Hills, a California megachurch, is encouraging churches across the country to host ballot collection initiatives ahead of the 2024 election. With Americans showing an increasing willingness to cast their votes before Election Day, these efforts aim to bolster Christian participation in the electoral process.

Under the banner of its Real Impact ministry, founded by Pastor Jack Hibbs, the church seeks to empower other churches to “stand for righteousness in the public square.” The ministry’s leader, Gina Gleason, revealed that their involvement in ballot collecting began after changes in California’s election laws.

The transformation in legislation, which allowed for the practice known as “ballot harvesting,” was passed into California law in 2016 and implemented during the 2018 election. This resulted in significant wins for Democrats and progressive candidates. In response, Calvary Chapel Chino Hills decided to engage in similar activities when they became legal.

Under the updated California law, individuals can turn in ballots for others, regardless of whether they are family members or reside in the same household. There is no limit to the number of ballots a person can collect and submit.

Gleason emphasized that the church collected thousands of ballots during the 2020 and 2022 election cycles, and they plan to continue these efforts in the future. The church’s involvement in ballot collecting has gained popularity, with

people from all over Southern California delivering their ballots to the church.

Real Impact's activities are not limited to California. Gleason mentioned that there are 17 states where churches can engage in ballot collection, and these efforts have the potential to increase voter turnout among Christians.

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While some conservatives prefer to vote on Election Day and have criticized "ballot harvesting," national leaders stress the importance of taking advantage of early voting and mail-in ballot laws. Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, urged attendees to use these opportunities for voting, citing examples where early voting made a significant impact.

Despite the debate on the best voting methods, Calvary Chapel Chino Hills is facilitating and simplifying the voting process for Christians. In addition to ballot collecting, they conduct voter registration drives every Sunday and create voter guides for school board and city council races.

Gleason emphasized the importance of remaining nonpartisan when engaging in ballot collection efforts. Churches that collect ballots should not inquire about party affiliations or candidate preferences. This nonpartisan approach ensures that churches maintain their tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service.

Calvary Chapel Chino Hills' commitment to encouraging Christian engagement in the political process goes beyond ballot collection. They believe in the power of Christians participating in elections to shape policy and protect cherished principles.

With varying ballot collection laws across different states, not every church can engage in these efforts to the same extent. Gleason identified the states where it is feasible for churches to collect ballots, highlighting the unique legal landscape in each state.

By promoting early voting and maintaining a nonpartisan stance, Calvary Chapel Chino Hills aims to make the voting process more accessible for Christians and enhance their impact on elections. Their dedication to civic engagement extends to voter registration drives and educational resources, offering a comprehensive approach to Christian involvement in the political arena.{eo}

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