

# IRS Agents Can Pose as Clergy to Spy on Churches

A *New York Times* front-page story shared that IRS rules allow that “an undercover employee or cooperating private individual may pose as an attorney, physician, clergyman or member of the news media.”

*The New York Times* also goes on to state that the IRS allows much more “latitude” than other federal agencies in gathering information.

Rev. Patrick J. Mahoney, Director of the Christian Defense Coalition, states:

“It is troubling and an outrage that members of the IRS can pose as members of the clergy to gather information for the government. The First Amendment and the foundational principles of religious freedom that have long been embraced and honored by our nation are being trampled by these rules.

“The church and faith community are now being faced with the reality that the government is sending IRS agents pretending to be members of the clergy into Christian meetings, gatherings and services for the distinct purpose of the government “spying” on them. Also, American citizens must confront the fact that when they share their concerns with a member of the clergy, they may be talking to an IRS agent.

“This is clearly a trampling of the First Amendment which affords to every American the right to freely worship according to the dictates of their conscience without government interference and harassment. It is the role of the government to protect religious freedom and faith not use it as tool to try and gather information or spy on their

citizens.

“What makes this policy even more disturbing is the fact that the IRS is implementing it. This is the same organization that is facing blistering criticism and Congressional hearings for attacking the political beliefs and views of citizens and groups that the government does not agree with. Simply stated, this policy by the IRS must be dropped immediately.”

*Here is a link to The New York Times story.*