

IRS Becomes 'Belief Police,' Tells Nonprofit to Keep Faith to Itself

The Internal Revenue Service was caught on tape telling a nonprofit organization, which waited nearly 2 1/2 years to receive tax-exempt status, to keep its faith to itself.

Alliance Defending Freedom made public Monday audio of a phone conversation that the IRS placed to a nonprofit organization that provides support to women in abusive pregnancy situations. In the recorded phone conversation, an IRS agent lectures the president of the organization about forcing its religion and beliefs on others and inaccurately explains that the group must remain neutral on issues such as abortion.

Alliance Defending Freedom represents the group, which did not receive its tax-exempt status until last week, nearly 2 1/2 years after applying for it.

"The IRS is a tax collector; it shouldn't be allowed to be the speech-and-belief police," says senior legal counsel Erik Stanley. "The current scandal isn't new but has merely exposed the abuse of power that characterizes this agency and threatens our fundamental freedoms."

The IRS grants tax exemptions to religious, educational and/or charitable organizations. In January 2011, Pro-Life Revolution, which operates from Texas under all three purposes, filed an application for tax-exempt status with the IRS.

Four months later, the IRS sent a letter requesting "more information" and an explanation of how the organization's activities are educational or charitable even though IRS rules specify that an organization need only operate for "one or

more” of the three exempt purposes. President of Pro-Life Revolution Ania Joseph nonetheless replied and answered the IRS’ questions.

In March 2012, Joseph received a call from IRS Exempt Organization Specialist Sherry Wan, who told her that, in order to obtain a tax exemption, “You cannot force your religion or force your beliefs on somebody else. ... You have to know your boundaries. You have to know your limits. You have to respect other people’s beliefs.” The IRS has approved applications for tax exemption for pro-abortion groups such as Planned Parenthood and Life and Liberty for Women.

In February of this year, the IRS requested additional information in another letter and attempted to apply a standard for tax exemption to Pro-Life Revolution that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit held to be unconstitutional in 1980. Alliance Defending Freedom pointed this out in a letter responding to the IRS, which finally granted tax-exempt status to the organization in a letter received Thursday.

“The power to tax is the power to destroy,” adds Stanley. “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. We cannot allow the IRS to ruthlessly dictate against legitimate nonprofits simply because it does not approve of the organization’s mission. It must be held accountable.”