

SPEAK UP.

PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE RIGHTS OF OUR CHURCHES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q As a pastor in the U.S., what threats to religious freedom do I need to be aware of?

A In recent years, government intrusion into the affairs of the Church has become a growing threat to religious freedom in three particular ways:

FREEDOM TO EXERCISE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

- State and Federal governments are interfering with the Church's application of biblical standards to internal discipline and employment practices.
- Worship services are being disrupted by protestors who trespass or block access to church property.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

- Threats of IRS audits and enforcement are used to intimidate and silence pastors who want to speak to their congregations – from a scriptural basis – about the positions of political candidates on moral issues.
- State governments are implementing campaign finance laws that treat churches as political action committees if pastors so much as encourage their people to vote for or against a particular law.

FREEDOM OF ACCESS

- Discriminatory policies are being used to deny churches equal access to hold worship services in public venues that other groups utilize without restriction or penalty.
- Zoning restrictions and land-use ordinances are being established that specifically discriminate against churches – restricting when and where services may be held.

The Alliance Defense Fund has successfully defended churches and Christian ministries against all of these threats and intrusions.

Q Is government interference really that much of a threat in the U.S.?

A More and more, government regulations and court rulings are intruding into the inner workings and ministries of the Church. From coast to coast, pastors and ministry leaders in churches like

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yours are being told who they can or cannot hire and fire, how much they can discipline church members who violate scriptural standards of morality, and even when and where their church can meet.

What's more, pastors, lay leaders, and Christian ministry leaders are increasingly being pressured to preach only "politically correct" passages from the Bible, to conform their sermons to culturally accepted norms of what the Church "ought to talk about," and to keep silent about "political" issues and candidates whose positions have profound moral consequences for the nation and their community.

Pastors across America are being told that city regulations or selective zoning restrictions prohibit their churches from using their own facilities and resources to minister to the poor and needy ... that public parks aren't available for church picnics ... that the ringing of church bells is "disturbing the peace."

In a land that was founded by people seeking religious liberty, those who try to "mind their own business" and simply minister to their community are being blocked at every turn. Those who try to work with the government are finding it harder and harder to do so, and those who would challenge these intrusions are being intimidated into silence by threats of litigation or prosecution.

Q Does the government have any authority to exert these kinds of controls on my preaching or our church's ministry efforts?

A No. The First Amendment guarantees your right to hear and speak the Truth, and your church's freedom to enjoy equal access to public funds and facilities. The government cannot legally tell you what Bible passages are off limits, or limit what prayer or message or Scripture you share in a public forum, or drive you from a public sidewalk, park, or building in which you are respectfully sharing your faith. Nor can government officials arbitrarily enforce zoning laws just to keep your congregation out of places they don't want you. However, laws like the Hate Crimes bill passed by Congress can lead to silencing anyone who would speak out against immoral behavior, even from the pulpit ... and open the doors for other legal persecutions against pastors and church leaders and people of faith.

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Q Doesn't the "separation of church and state" prohibit pastors from addressing issues that might be considered "political"?

A The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution says: "*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof*" – so the Constitution does not require pastors to be silent about political matters in their churches. The so-called "separation of church and state" is merely a rhetorical device that has been used for half a century to browbeat Christians and drive them out of the public square. The IRS Code does limit churches to using an "insubstantial" amount of their resources when lobbying for or against legislation, and prohibits churches from intervening in political campaigns. ADF believes that the ban on campaign participation by churches is unconstitutional and is challenging the restriction through its Pulpit Initiative.

Q What should I do if I believe my church's rights are being violated?

A Learn the facts. Visit www.SpeakUpMovement.org to find out more about how ADF is successfully defending – at no cost to the client – the right to freely speak, act, and minister in accordance with biblical principles without fear of government censorship, punishment, unlawful regulation, or loss of tax exemption. If you believe that you or your church have been the target of religious discrimination, call 1-800-TELL-ADF to speak with one of our attorneys about the specific circumstances of your situation.

Q What is the Alliance Defense Fund?

A The Alliance Defense Fund is a legal alliance defending the right to hear and speak the Truth through strategy, training, funding, and litigation. We are committed to defending our nation's *First Liberty* – religious freedom. By protecting the sanctity of life, preserving marriage and the family, and promoting religious liberty, we are working to keep the door open for the spread of the Gospel.

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