



## **The Alliance Defense Fund Pulpit Initiative** **What It Is – What It’s Not**

### **The Pulpit Initiative is *not* about...**

- ▣ turning the church into a Political Action Committee
- ▣ allowing contributions to candidates
- ▣ any particular candidate or political party
- ▣ “political” speech
- ▣ endorsing or opposing candidates

### **The Pulpit Initiative *is*...**

- ▣ a bold defense of the First Amendment’s Establishment, Free Exercise, and Free Speech clauses
- ▣ about protecting core religious expression
- ▣ only related to what a pastor says from his pulpit, for example, on a Sunday morning (i.e., not about voter guides, candidate appearances, or other “political” activities)

The purpose of the Pulpit Initiative is to restore the right of pastors to speak freely from the pulpit without fear of punishment by the government for doing what churches do: speak on any number of cultural and societal issues from a biblical perspective. The purpose of the ADF Pulpit Initiative is not – as some have intentionally tried to confuse the issue – about whether pastors should or should not “endorse” candidates. The issue with which ADF is concerned is over *who regulates* what may be said from the pulpit.

Certainly, congregations and a church’s leadership can tell pastors they don’t want names of candidates spoken from the pulpit. But that is very different from government censorship. To government regulators, today’s “Gospel” may well be words that are tomorrow’s “politics.” ADF has already defended Americans in many cases where publicly preaching words straight from the Gospel has led to censorship...and even jail.

The bottom line is that no enforcement agency of the federal government should be telling a pastor what he can or cannot say from his pulpit about the Bible and his church’s teaching on the issues of the hour – even if the pastor’s sermon applies Scripture and church teaching to candidates and elections. Such agencies certainly cannot condition tax-exempt status—a status churches have always been constitutionally guaranteed since our founding—on the surrender of cherished First Amendment rights.

ADF has the U.S. Constitution and the weight of American history on its side. Those who oppose the Pulpit Initiative have yet to make one constitutionally-derived argument against it. It is ironic that they laud the “separation of church and state” in opposition to the Pulpit Initiative, but by opposing the initiative, are asking for continued government control and censorship of a pastor’s sermon. The pulpit is no place for government regulators.