

- ★ In order to be nonpartisan, a voter registration drive must be designed and carried out in a nonpartisan manner, not showing any bias for or against certain candidates or political parties.
- ★ A church may conduct a voter registration drive in a coalition effort with other organizations. However, care must be taken that the other organizations do not engage in prohibited partisan activities under the auspices of the coalition, since those activities could be attributed to the church.
- ★ A pastor may use a sermon, bulletin announcement or organized “telephone tree” to remind members before and on Election Day to vote.
- ★ Phone efforts and van pools designed to turn out the vote should not be associated with a particular candidate or political party.

Voter Education/Voter Guides

Several nonpartisan, nonprofit groups like Concerned Women for America publish voter guides that are appropriate for church distribution and do not jeopardize a church’s nonprofit status. Generally, the voter guide must cover a wide range of issues and avoid editorial comment. The distribution of an incumbent’s voting record would also be appropriate, as long as the publication avoided editorial comments that would prompt a reader to vote for a specific candidate.

ELECTION-RELATED ACTIVITIES NOT ALLOWED IN CHURCHES:

Endorsing Candidates

A church may not endorse or oppose a candidate for public office. Nor can a pastor from the pulpit—or acting on behalf of the church—endorse or oppose a candidate.

Appearances by Candidates

A candidate may not be allowed to deliver a political speech, particularly to garner support or raise funds for a campaign.

Contributions and Fundraising

- ★ Under the Internal Revenue Code, a church may not contribute money to or raise funds for a political party or a candidate for public office.
- ★ The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) is applicable. FECA prohibits any corporation from making contributions or expenditures in connection with a federal campaign. Those churches which are incorporated are subject to this provision.
- ★ Candidates cannot be allowed to use church facilities for political purposes because this may be viewed as equivalent to a contribution (i.e., a candidate may not use a church facility to make a political speech or meet with party officials to strategize).

Mailing Lists

A church may not loan its membership list or mailing list to a candidate or political committee for use in an election campaign. This would violate the Internal Revenue Code prohibition on participation in an election campaign. In a federal election, it could also violate the FECA prohibition on indirect expenditures by a corporation for a federal campaign since church funds were used to develop the membership list.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Our nation and our government are in desperate need of salt and light, which only the church, her pastors and her people can provide. By understanding and creatively using the lawful means at your disposal, you can make a difference.

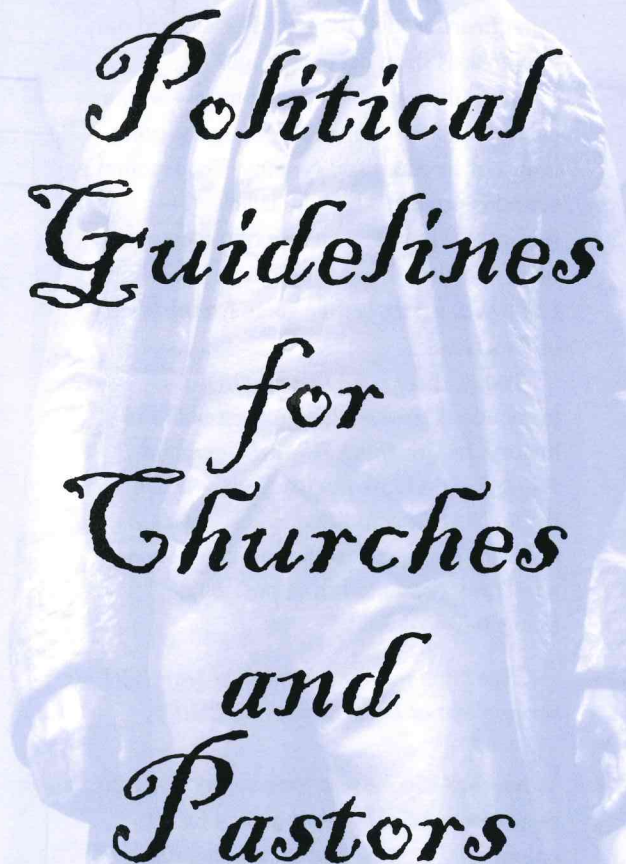
Concerned Women for America (CWA) is the nation’s largest grassroots women’s organization devoted to public policy issues. CWA, like your church, operates under the guidelines of a 501(c)(3) organization in its voter education projects. Your church may be interested in contacting the local CWA State or Area Director for information on holding a CWA-sponsored candidate forum. For more information about CWA in your area, contact:

Concerned Women for America
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www.cwfa.org

This brochure has been reviewed and approved by CWA’s legal counsel, Webster, Chamberlain & Bean, Washington, D.C.

This pamphlet is intended to be a general discussion and should not be interpreted as legal advice. Churches or pastors needing advice as to particular circumstances should seek the counsel of their own legal/tax advisors.

A CWA Resource



Political Guidelines for Churches and Pastors

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR CHURCHES IN DETERMINING HOW TO AFFECT GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING THEIR NON-PROFIT STATUS