

Politics and the Church

Extract from John Eldredge's article in October 1996 issue of Focus on the Family

Pastors can address social issues from the pulpit, if they stick to what the Bible says about those issues and they don't go so far as to tell the congregation how to vote, or who to vote for.

A church may,

1. lobby for or against particular legislation as long as such lobbying is not a "substantial part" of the church's overall activity.
2. participate actively in initiatives, referendums, ballot questions, and referendums, including outright endorsement or opposition. These are not considered partisan political activity. However, such efforts cannot be a "substantial part" of the church's activity.
3. provide nonpartisan voter education, including voter registration drives, hosting political debates if all candidates are invited and treated impartially.
4. provide or sell a membership list to a candidate as long as all candidates know the list is available, and they may obtain it as well.
5. publish an ad in the church bulletin for candidates as long as sale of ads is a common practice, and any candidate may purchase one. There must also be a disclaimer that the church is not endorsing any candidate.
6. publish a voter's guide as long as there is no partiality, for example:
 - a. no comments to clarify an incumbent's voting record
 - b. no percentage plus or minus in favor of a particular point of view
 - c. no restatement of vote so that all YES/NO votes favor a position
 - d. no inflammatory language such as pro-abortion or "baby-killer"
 - e. no mention of a political action committee
 - f. no limited questions or issues - keep issues broad

A church may NOT,

1. endorse a political candidate
2. contribute to a political candidate or PAC
3. donate a mailing list to a candidate
4. participate in fund-raising projects for a PAC
5. sell a political ad at a discount to a candidate unless all candidates get discount
6. distribute political statements for one or more candidates
7. pay to attend a caucus for a state or national convention
8. make in-kind or independent expenditures in favor of or opposing candidates