

ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM
CHURCH ALLIANCE

Religious liberty legal membership for churches

Political Activity Checklist for Churches

The checklist below serves as general guidance for what churches and pastors can and cannot do related to various political activities. It should not be construed as legal advice. To learn more about how churches and pastors may engage politically within the boundaries of the law, visit 2020LegalGuide.com. To learn more about ADF Church Alliance membership, which enables you to obtain legal advice about how your church can engage, visit ADFChurchAlliance.org.

| Political Activity | Church ¹ | Pastor ² |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Discuss political issues | Yes | Yes |
| Support or oppose candidates for elective public office | No | Yes |
| Contribute money, services, or non-monetary gifts to candidates | No | Yes |
| Raise or spend money to support or oppose candidates | No | Yes |
| Contribute to political action committees (PACs) | No | Yes |
| Payment of expenses for attendance of a pastor or church member at a caucus or state/national political party convention | No | Yes |
| Candidate speaks at church (outside context of candidacy or campaign) | Yes | N/A |
| Nonpartisan voter registration activities | Yes | Yes |
| Nonpartisan voter identification activities | Yes | Yes |
| Nonpartisan “get-out-the-vote” activities | Yes | Yes |
| Nonpartisan voter education | Yes | Yes |
| Lobby for or against legislation | Limited* | Yes |
| Support or oppose ballot measures | Limited* | Yes |
| Spend money to advance or defeat ballot measures | Limited* | Yes |
| Distribute: | | |
| a) Nonpartisan candidate surveys or voter guides | Yes | Yes |
| b) Unbiased voting records of candidates | Yes | Yes |
| c) Candidate campaign literature | No | Yes |
| Equal distribution of political materials by others in church parking lots | Yes | N/A |
| Rental of church facilities at regular rates (available to all candidates) | Yes | N/A |
| Church publications: | | |
| a) Provide link on website to a particular campaign website | No | N/A |
| b) Publish editorials endorsing or opposing candidates | No | N/A |

Visit 2020LegalGuide.com for more information.

1. “Church” refers to an official position or action taken by or on behalf of the church.

2. “Pastor” refers to a pastor speaking or acting in their personal capacity as an individual, not in their professional capacity on behalf of the church. Alliance Defending Freedom believes the Johnson Amendment unconstitutionally restricts pastors’ First Amendment rights under certain circumstances, even when they act or speak in their official capacities.

*Churches are limited to an “insubstantial amount” of lobbying activities.