

The _____ Christian Citizenship _____ Plan

A guide for basic Citizenship in Churches



Stand up! Speak up! And refuse to give up! _____

“Historically we did!”

Should Christians be Active Citizens?

“The church must take right ground in regards to politics ... The time has come for Christians to vote for honest men, and take consistent ground in politics or the Lord will curse them ...

God cannot sustain this free and blessed country, which we love and pray for, unless the Church will take right ground. Politics are a part of a religion in such a country as this, and Christians must do their duty to their country as a part of their duty to God ...

God will bless or curse this nation according to the course Christians take in politics.”

REV. CHARLES G. FINNEY

“I often hear it said, ‘Do not bring religion into politics.’

This is precisely where it ought to be brought!

We have had enough of clever men without conscience. Now let us see what honest, God-fearing men will do.”

REV. CHARLES H. SPURGEON

“It is hoped that but few will think the subject of it an improper one to be discoursed in the pulpit, under a notion that this is preaching politics instead of Christ. However, to remove all prejudices of this sort, I beg it may be remembered that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

Why, then, should not those parts of Scripture which relate to civil government be examined and explained from the desk, as well as others?”

REV. JONATHAN MAHEW, 1749

“First, it is their judgment, and that from Scripture taught them, that those who are chosen to a place in government, must be men truly fearing God, wise and learned in the truths of Christ.”

REV. JONATHAN EDWARDS, 1654

“Bad men cannot make good citizens. It is impossible that a nation of infidels or idolaters should be a nation of free men.

It is when a people forget God, that tyrants forge their chains.

A vitiated state of morals, a corrupted public conscience, is incompatible with freedom.”

PATRICK HENRY

“It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here.”

PATRICK HENRY

“The highest glory of the American Revolution was this:

It connected in one indissoluble bond, the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity.”

PRESIDENT JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

A Plan to Promote Active Citizenship in the Local Church

Dear Colleague,

Voting was once considered a nearly sacred duty in the United States of America. Samuel Adams, a dedicated Christian often referred to as “The Father of the American Revolution,” admonished the people to be faithful in voting.

“Let each citizen remember at the moment he is offering his vote that he is not making a present or a compliment to please an individual — or at least that he ought not so to do; but that he is executing one of the most solemn trusts in human society for which he is accountable to God and his country.”

John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court said, “Providence has given to our people the choice of their ruler, and it is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.”

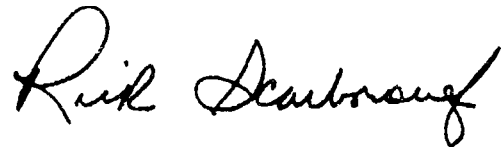
The convicting truth is that most Christians today do not vote regularly, and many are not even registered to vote. The responsibility of assuring that believers are fulfilling their basic duties to promote godly government by voting regularly does rest with the church.

Very simply, since God has ordained the governing authorities, and since “We the People” ARE the government in this country, God’s people carry the responsibility of governing more than all other citizens.

We have enclosed a simple plan that can be implemented in any church while fully complying with all IRS policies governing such activities by churches. The plan is to get as many Christians as possible to the voting booth for every election.

The purpose is not to create political power but rather when our Lord asks us how we managed our stewardship of the gift of freedom, we may hear those wonderful words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

Your Servant,



PASTOR RICK SCARBOROUGH
First Baptist Church, Pearland, Texas
President and National Co-Chairman,
Vision America

“If the people fail to vote, a government will be developed which is not their government ... The whole system of American Government rests on the ballot box. Unless citizens perform their duties there, such a system of government is doomed to failure.”

PRESIDENT CALVIN COOLIDGE

“Legally we can!”

Guidelines for Political Action by Churches and Pastors

*BY JAMES BOPP JR., GENERAL COUNSEL,
NATIONAL RIGHT TO LIFE COMMITTEE, INC.*

As local, state and national elections approach, the need for clear guidelines on the permissible political activities of churches and pastors becomes great.

This paper provides these guidelines based upon the requirements of the Federal Election Campaign Act and the Internal Revenue Code.

These are guidelines for action recommended to insure that churches and pastors conform with the law.

While the law may allow variations from these guidelines, experience has shown that the safest and best course for these organizations and individuals is to act in conformance with these recommendations.

One caution, state laws may be more restrictive than these guidelines and, therefore, in applying them to specific situations, particularly state elections, you should consult your own local counsel.

IRS Tax Exempt Status of Churches

Almost all churches are exempt under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code on the basis that they are “operated exclusively for religious, charitable or educational purposes.”

As a 501 (c)(3) exempt organization, a church:

- (1) is exempt from paying corporate income taxes, and donations to it are tax deductible on federal tax returns; and
- (2) may expend funds for religious, charitable and educational purposes, and an insubstantial amount on lobbying and to promote legislation.

A 501 (c)(3) exempt organization, however, may not “participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.”

Thus, a church may not participate in a political campaign by expenditure of its funds. Not all political activity which would influence a political campaign, falls under this prohibition.

Political Activities

Political activities referred to here are activities which influence the election of candidates for political office, most of which are referred to as electioneering. Activities which can influence the election of a political candidate are quite broad and range from contributions to a political candidate to publishing the voting records of incumbents running for reelection. Only some of these activities are considered active electioneering, which cannot be done by a church; some can be done by a 501 (c)(3) organization. It depends on the type of activity.

Active electioneering cannot be done by a church. It involves such actions as endorsement of candidates and expenditures of funds to expressly advocate the election or defeat of a candidate for political office.

There are three types of Active Electioneering.

- (1) a direct monetary contribution to a specific candidate.
- (2) in-kind contributions which include giving things of value to a candidate (such as a church mailing list) and paying for a communication which expressly advocates the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate made in consultation with, or with the knowledge of, the candidate.
- (3) independent expenditures which expressly advocate the election or defeat of a political candidate made without the knowledge of or consultation with any candidate.

However, individual pastors may participate in political campaigns as long as they do so as individuals, and not in the name of the church. Any individual, including a pastor, may wear different hats at different times and, therefore, be involved in political activity as long as he is wearing the right hat.

The following is a list of activities that may be considered political activities in the broad sense, and that a church or an individual pastor using his own funds, may wish to do. A “Yes” response means the activity is permissible and, a “No” response means it is not.

Guidelines for Political Activities of Churches and Pastors

Question	Church	Pastor	Question	Church	Pastor	Question	Church	Pastor
1. Discuss the positions of candidates on public issues	Yes	Yes	7. Payment of Expenses for Attendance	No	Yes	11. Rent Church List at Market Value	Yes	N/A
2. Endorsement of Political Candidates	No	Yes	8. Appearance of Political Candidate at Church Meeting or Service	Yes	N/A	12. Nonpartisan Voter Education and Registration	Yes	Yes
3. Contributions to Political Candidates	No	Yes	9. Distribute:			13. Church Bulletin or Newsletter		
4. In-Kind Expenditures In Favor of or Against Political Candidates	No	Yes	(a) Candidate Surveys	Yes	Yes	(1) Political Ads at regular rate	Yes	N/A
5. Independent Expenditures In Favor of or Against Political Candidates	No	Yes	(b) Voting Records	Yes	Yes	(2) Political Ads at less than regular rate	No	N/A
6. Contributions to PACs	No	Yes	(c) Candidate Political Statement	No	Yes	(3) News Stories	Yes	N/A
			10. Distribution by others of Candidate Political Statements in Church Parking Lot	Yes	N/A	(4) Editorials	No	N/A

Explanation of Individual Items

Item 1 – Discuss positions of candidates on public issues

Pastors and churches are free to discuss the positions of candidates on issues, including criticizing or praising them for their positions. This is called “issue advocacy.”

Item 2 – Endorsement of Political Candidates

The endorsement of a candidate includes any statement which uses explicit words to expressly advocate the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate, such as ‘elect,’ ‘support,’ ‘defeat,’ or ‘oppose.’

This is called express advocacy and a church may not engage in express advocacy, but a pastor, in his individual capacity, may.

Item 3 – Contributions to Political Candidates

No further explanation available from National Right to Life Committee, Inc.

Item 4 – In-Kind Expenditures and Political Candidates

No further explanation available from National Right to Life Committee, Inc.

Item 5 – Independent Expenditures and Political Candidates

No further explanation available from National Right to Life Committee, Inc.

Item 6 – Contributions to PACs

No further explanation available from National Right to Life Committee, Inc.

Item 7 – Payment of Expenses for Attendance

No further explanation available from National Right to Life Committee, Inc.

Item 8 – Candidate Appearance at Church Meeting

A political candidate may appear at a church service. The appearance of candidate before a church service, however, is limited as follows:

- (1) Any other candidate for the office or any other political party who is a candidate for the office and requests to appear must be given the same opportunity; and
- (2) No solicitation for funds for the candidate or endorsement of the candidate may be made by any representative of the church.

In addition, a church may allow political candidates to have a meeting to use the facilities of the church on the same basis that civic groups and other organizations are allowed.

If civic groups and other organizations are required to pay rent for using the church property, the political candidate should be charged the same amount.

Item 9 (a) – Candidate Survey

A church may publish or distribute the results of surveys of candidates on public issues.

Such surveys, however, must be nonpartisan. As a result, 501 (c)(3) church groups should observe the following conditions in publishing or distributing the survey:

- (1) Publish the response of all the candidates for the particular office by use of ‘yes’ and ‘no.’ Avoid use of ‘+’ and ‘-’ or ‘pro-life’ and ‘anti-life.’ The survey should not specify what is the desired response.
- (2) Do not include any words indicating either endorsement of or support for any of the candidates or indicate that the reader should ‘vote pro-life.’ Advocacy of one-issue voting should be reserved for other issues of the church bulletin when the survey is not published.
- (3) Do not publish the response to the survey under the control, direct or indirect, of any candidate. It is preferable that candidate surveys involve a variety of issues, but this is not required.

Item 9 (b) – Voting Records

501(c)(3) church groups may also publish the voting records of incumbent public officeholders. In the case of publication of voting records, the church has more leeway than in publishing candidate surveys as follows:

- (1) The church, in publishing the incumbent’s votes on particular issues, may indicate the church’s view and the fact that the incumbent supported or opposed the church’s view. Thus, ‘+’ or ‘-’ or ‘Pro-life’ and ‘anti-life’ may be used, and

Explanation of Individual Items

(2) In other respects, the publications should be nonpartisan. As a result, (a) the voting records of all incumbents in the area could be presented, (b) candidates for reelection should not be identified, no comment should be made on an individual's overall qualifications for public office, and no statements expressly advocating the election or defeat of any incumbent as a candidate for public office should be offered.

Item 9 (c) – Candidate Political Statement

No further explanation available from National Right to Life Committee, Inc.

Item 10 – Distribution by others of Candidate Political Statement in Church Parking Lot

No further explanation available from National Right to Life Committee, Inc.

Item 11 – Rental of Church List to Political Candidates

Lists of members of the church congregation may be rented to candidates for their use in seeking support or raising funds. The candidate must pay the fair market value for the list, if it is rented from the church.

Item 12 – Voter Education

A church may participate in nonpartisan voter education. Here, voter education involves discussion of the electoral process, such as how to run for public office or delegate, how to register, where to vote, helping or assisting people with registration and 'get out the vote' drives. All such activity is permissible as long as it is not directed at one party or candidate over another.

Item 13 – Church Bulletin or Newsletter

(a)(b) Political Ads

A church bulletin or newsletter may publish an ad for a political candidate, as long as the ad is purchased at the regular rate for such ads published in that bulletin. If discounts are given regular advertisers under certain circumstances, the same discounts may be extended to the political advertiser.

In addition, the bulletin may be selective in printing ads – for instance, only ads from pro-life candidates can be accepted. A political ad may not be sold to a candidate at less than the regular rate, since this would constitute a political contribution to the candidate.

(c) News Stories

A bulletin published by a church may publish, without limitation, news stories on political candidates, political campaigns and endorsements of political candidates by political organizations.

The publication of voting records and candidate surveys in bulletins are subject to limitations delineated in Items 9 (a) and 9 (b).

(d) Editorials

A bulletin published by a 501 (c)(3) church, however, may not publish an editorial supporting or endorsing a candidate for political office. This would be considered a church endorsement, which it may not do.

Pastors

Pastors, as individuals, have the same rights as all other American citizens to involve themselves in political activity. Pastors, thus, have much greater latitude to involve themselves in political activities than does a church. The following should guide a pastor regarding personal political activities which may relate to his church position:

(1) A pastor may individually and personally endorse candidates for political office, but a pastor may not endorse candidates on behalf of his church.

(2) A pastor's personal endorsement may be made from the pulpit if it is clear that it is his personal view and not that of the church itself.

(3) A pastor may allow his name to be used as a supporter of a candidate in the candidate's political advertisements. In this connection, the pastor may be identified as pastor of a particular church.

(4) While a church may not establish a political action committee, pastors and other like-minded individuals may establish a political action committee; however, care should be taken that the committee is separate from the church, and that no use is made of church assets or facilities, except to the extent that church facilities are allowed to be used by other outside groups.

“Biblically we must!”

“You shall elect, out of all the people, able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them, as leaders ...”

(Ex. 18:21)

The Church’s Right to Promote Active Citizenship

Activist courts and ultraliberal organizations have helped create an environment in which pastors and churches have been intimidated into believing that they must violate their God-given responsibilities as the prophetic voice of righteousness and remain silent on the issues of our day.

The following information that was produced by one of the nation’s leading legal scholars on this subject clearly shows what pastors and churches CAN do in regard to activities regarded as “political.”

The bottom line, even within the parameters of the 501 (c)(3) non-profit regulations, the church has great latitude to assure that her members are active, informed, involved and VOTING. The only questions are, ‘If not us, who?’ and ‘If not now, when?’

RICK SCARBOROUGH

The Role of the Church in Registering Voters

Overview

Every state has laws regulating the process of qualifying men and women to vote, however, with the Federal Voter law that was passed by Congress in 1993, the process of registering to vote has become very simple. Many churches conduct regular voter registration activities to assure maximum participation, and their right to do so is clearly established in the Internal Revenue Code governing 501 (c)(3) non profit corporations.

“The IRS has ruled that even private foundations may support nonpartisan voter registration drives. T.D. Release K-87, May 11, 1969” (POLITICAL ACTIVITY BY CLERGYMEN, ALAN DYE, ESQ., WEBSTER, CHAMBERLAIN & BEAN.)

The question, then, is how to conduct the drive in the most efficient and effective manner possible given the available manpower of the church. The following provides three alternative methods of conducting voter registration, and we will propose them in the order of their efficiency.

NOTE: We recommend that the pastor appoint a Christian Citizenship Coordinator and ministry team. They will then be responsible for performing the tasks of Citizenship Sunday, as well as ongoing informational and educational support for the pastor and congregation, under the authority of the pastor.

Method I – In the Pews

Many pastors, including Dr. Jerry Falwell of Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, use the following method of actively promoting basic voter registration in their churches.

- A. If necessary according to applicable state laws, qualify several members of the church leadership as deputy voter registrars to oversee the Project. (Contact elections office for requirements)
- B. Acquire voter registration forms from the local or state elections office in sufficient quantity based on church roster size or attendance.

- C. Schedule and promote a Citizenship Sunday as a specific time to emphasize and register voters. We encourage the church to promote Citizenship Sunday opportunities in four ways:
- (1) The church newsletter
 - (2) The Sunday church bulletin — use inserts if possible
 - (3) Discussion by the Pastor from the pulpit
 - (4) The use of posters where appropriate
- D. On Citizenship Sunday:
- (1) Prepare ushers with a sufficient quantity of voter registration and absentee ballot request forms.
 - a. The suggested amount would cover one-half of the adult attendance for each service.
 - (2) Set up a table in the foyer with one or more of the ministry team members in attendance to address any questions after the service.
 - (3) At the appropriate time during the service, Senior Pastor would address the issue of voting, and ask ushers to distribute voter registration and absentee ballot request forms to those who request them.
 - a. Ideally, time should be given for people to complete the forms and pass them back to be collected by the ushers. An alternative would be to ask people to leave them with ushers at the end of the service.
 - b. Ushers take all completed registration forms to the voter registration table where they are given to the Citizenship Coordinator.
 - c. All forms should be viewed for completion, and forms that are filled out properly are then mailed or delivered to the local elections office.

If you have appointed a Citizenship Coordinator he/she should contact any person within 24 hours whose form is filled out incorrectly or incompletely to assure accuracy.

Method II – In the Foyer

(Can be used in conjunction with Method III)

Another common method of voter registration is to simply set up a table or booth in the main foyer of the church where people can stop by before or after the service.

Because most people attend to several different responsibilities in the church, including Sunday School, taking children to their classes, and other pre-service responsibilities, many people who are not registered will bypass a table – planning to “come back by later.”

This method is less effective than “In the Pews,” but the task can be accomplished if given the necessary promotion by the Pastor.

- A. On Citizenship Sunday
- (1) Include bulletin inserts in order to alert people to the availability of voter registration forms.
 - (2) Set up a table or booth in a highly visible location in the foyer with signage provided or prepared by the Citizenship Coordinator and approved by the Pastor.
 - a. Ideally, the table should be set up at least one-half hour prior to and after each morning and evening service.
 - b. Citizenship Coordinator and/or volunteers set up the required materials. At least two prepared volunteers should be available to assist people who stop by prior to the service.
 - (3) Mention the availability of voter registration during at least two points of the service in order to maximize effectiveness.
 - a. First, draw attention to the registration table and the bulletin insert during announcements.
 - b. Second, and most importantly, Senior Pastor should mention at the close of service that voter registration is available, and should strongly encourage people who are not registered or are unsure of their voter status to go to the registration table before leaving.
 - (4) The Citizenship Coordinator or a designated individual should personally collect all completed voter registration forms, and assure that each name is listed on the tally sheet for follow-up purposes.

Method III – In the Office

This method is the most accurate way of determining which members and regular church attendees are registered to vote. It is also the most time-consuming, and is best used after a Christian Citizenship ministry team has been more fully developed.

We still encourage Method II (In the Foyer) to be used in conjunction with this process to make it more convenient for individuals identified as unregistered to register.

- A. Acquire pastoral authorization for the Christian Citizenship ministry to plan and implement this project.
- B. Acquire the most current church list for use (specifically with this project) within the guidelines of church policy regarding the active mailing list.
- C. Acquire the most current registered voter file from the local elections office.
 - (1) Preferably, this would be an electronic file that can be sorted and printed in smaller sections.
 - (2) If only a print version is available, it can be manually separated into a number of sections appropriate for the size of the team.
- D. Schedule a “work party” for the Christian Citizenship ministry team.
 - (1) The size of the church list and the voter file will determine the number of volunteers needed. We suggest approximately one person per 100 names on church list.
- E. Match individuals on the church list against the voter file to identify those who are not currently registered. Each “no” should be marked for follow up.
- F. Assign one or two team members to call those identified and let them know that a voter registration form will be mailed to them, and will also be available on Citizenship Sunday.
- G. Project Coordinator or Christian Citizenship Ministry Coordinator assures that forms are mailed within 48 hours.
- H. Plan follow up call night in two weeks to contact form recipients and determine if they received and returned the forms.

The Role of the Church in Maximizing the Vote

Registering to vote is like getting your driver’s license — it’s great to have, but you must get in the car and turn the key in order to put it to use. One great dilemma of the church has been the number of Christians who are not even registered to vote. But an equally important issue is those who “have their license” but rarely if ever use it.

According to recent statistics, there are more than 300,000 Protestant churches in America, not including Roman Catholic parishes and Orthodox Jewish synagogues, with an average Sunday worship service attendance of 100 adults. Other estimates suggest that only one in four churchgoing Americans participate in the political process in any way. This means that 75%, or nearly 24 million churchgoing Americans are absent from the political playing field. **Their voices are not being heard!**

As a result, thousands of local, state and federal offices lack the influence of God-fearing, Bible-believing citizens who sit by in silence and watch America spin toward a moral abyss. We are NOT losing the war by being OUTGUNNED; we are losing the war by FORFEIT!

Fellow Pastors, you and I have a pivotal role to play in assuring that our congregates are performing the basic duty of voting. If Christians do not act responsibly and vote according to basic Biblical principles, we can fully expect ungodly, unrighteous government. Our visible leadership actively encouraging, — even insisting — that our people vote, makes a dramatic difference in the number of those who actually get out and vote.

Patriot Pulpits of the past did not hesitate. Now, realizing that historically we have encouraged them, legally we can, and scripturally we must, it is time to join thousands of pastors across America and “Stand For Righteousness” on Election Day.

RICK SCARBOROUGH

Objective: Encouraging the Congregation to Vote Get Out The Vote (GOTV)

To increase the number of eligible adults in the church who cast votes in each election. Note: it is equally important to vote in the primary election as in the general election.

SUGGESTED PLAN

- A. Add appropriate inserts into the bulletins to be distributed for the services on the Sunday before the election. These will be made available by Vision America.
- B. Set up an information table in the foyer staffed by the Citizenship Ministry team to answer questions about voting locations and other related issues.
 - (1) Have list of voting locations in the community available.
 - (2) Have a sign up sheet for those interested in staying informed on important moral and policy issues.
- C. At an appropriate time during the worship service, the Senior Pastor discusses the importance of voting responsibly. He then asks each eligible voter who is willing to commit in the next election to “Stand Up for Righteousness” in their pew or row to illustrate their commitment.
- D. Distribute nonpartisan voter guides:
 - (a) As church bulletin inserts, or
 - (b) At the doors as people leave the service, or
 - (c) By mailing directly to the church list

RECOMMENDED FOLLOW UP

- A. The Senior Pastor authorizes the Citizenship Ministry team or designated individual(s) to schedule and coordinate a phone bank to call through the church list and remind people to vote.
 - (1) Vision America can provide a sample script.
- B. The calls should be made in the two-day period prior to election day.
 - (1) Don't forget the Pizza and Soda!
- C. Have list of polling locations and extra voter guides available at the church on election day.
- D. The Citizenship Ministry team or designated individual(s) could also coordinate child care and transportation for those with such needs.

Summary

A government “... **of the people, by the people and for the people** ...” cannot function **without** the people! Most importantly, as our second President John Adams said, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” Any entity and institution will decay into immorality and corruption without the salt and light of Christ applied to it.

The family, church and government all depend on dedicated, Bible-believing Christians performing our duties consistently year in and year out. This is not “politics.” This is stewardship. **Let Him find us faithful!**

Vision America was founded in 1998 by Dr. Rick Scarborough, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Pearland, Texas. Vision America is a nationwide grassroots ministry that focuses on finding and enlisting “Patriot Pastors” who will lead their congregations to become active citizens. Vision America is also developing state affiliate organizations which serve to network churches in each state for an ongoing grassroots team who will “stand up, speak up and refuse to give up!”

Mission Statement

The mission of Vision America is to inform, encourage and mobilize pastors and their congregations to be proactive in restoring Judeo-Christian values into the culture and civil institutions of our nation.

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