

ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM

CHURCH ALLIANCE



Engaging Governing Authorities

As Americans, church leaders have a voice in how our government functions. Your voice, with God's blessing, can affect change and impact law and culture for the good of the Church. Your voice may even help preserve fundamental liberties – including the right to freely live out your faith.

Your decision to speak is a matter of conscience, conviction, and an understanding of the legal considerations surrounding civic engagement by churches.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Church leaders often wonder about the legal parameters to engaging with governing officials – and the public – on issues of public and moral importance.

You have more freedom to address public, political, and social issues than you may have thought.

Church leaders can speak out about the public, social, and moral issues of the day without restriction.

However, the law places limits on speech supporting or opposing specific legislation* and forbids churches from supporting or opposing candidates for elective public office.

***DEFINING LEGISLATION**

Legislation includes any action by Congress, a state legislature, local government, or similar body that makes laws. This also includes ballot initiatives, constitutional amendments, and votes on a public referendum. Legislation does not include actions by executive, judicial, or administrative bodies.



PERMITTED:

Discussion about issues and nonpartisan efforts related to voter education.



LIMITED TO AN “INSUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT”:

Supporting or opposing specific legislation.



NOT PERMITTED:

Supporting or opposing candidates for elective public office.

A church may discuss legislative issues, support or oppose legislation, and encourage its constituents or the general public to support or oppose legislation provided the church limits those efforts to what the law terms an “insubstantial amount.” To learn more about what might constitute an “insubstantial amount” please contact an attorney at Alliance Defending Freedom.

Always keep in mind that discussion about—or efforts related solely to—the issues is not restricted by law. Supporting or opposing specific legislation and candidates is where the regulation begins.

This brief overview of civic engagement should not be construed as legal advice. To obtain legal advice about how your church can become more engaged, please contact an attorney at Alliance Defending Freedom.

Want more information on navigating election season?
Learn more at ElectionLegalGuide.com.

Want more information on candidates?
Visit FreedomVoterGuide.com.



RELIGIOUS LIBERTY LEGAL HELP FOR CHURCHES