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Re: *Guide to Church Involvement in Ballot Gathering*

Dear Pastors:

In 2016, Governor Jerry Brown signed AB 1921 into law, which legalized the so-called practice of “ballot harvesting.” Previously, only a family member or someone living in the same household was permitted to drop off another voter’s mail-in ballot, but the new law now allows anyone – including church staff, church volunteers, and pastors – to collect and turn them in to the Registrar of Voters or Polling Place.

Ballot gathering by churches could be the key to success in positively impacting elections effecting Biblical issues.

Why is this important? Freedom of religion is at stake. Christianity is under attack by the progressive, secular lawmakers we have allowed to be elected over the years. Christian values and morals have been pushed out of schools and the public square and replaced by a culture of sexual confusion and hopelessness.

Churches are still subject to the Johnson Amendment. Therefore, tax-exempt religious entities are not allowed to “participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.”

However, even though churches are prohibited from supporting or opposing a candidate’s campaign, candidates may be introduced at a church service or may preach or read scripture or discuss matters of public concern. **In addition, churches and pastors can freely engage in non-partisan election related activities, including ballot gathering.**

By understanding the lawful means to participate in elections you can make a tremendous difference in government and public policy by helping members of your congregation become informed, responsible citizens for biblical truth.

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We encourage you to provide your congregants a theological worldview on all subjects facing society today. The law allows you to speak from the pulpit about social and moral issues like the actions of government officials in office, the positions of candidates on issues, budgeting, homelessness, immigration, taxes, marriage, drugs, crime, abortion, gender and sexuality.

Churches may also host biblical voter forums that include candidates or elected officials, as long as the forums are done in a non-partisan manner.

Below are examples of lawful election activities your church can organize and participate in:

1. **Begin by discussing from the pulpit** the current political and cultural issues that are biblical concerns of the church.
2. **Educate your congregation** about the ideological and biblical differences between the major political party platforms.
3. **Explain Christians' biblical responsibility to vote** and set up a voter registration table at your church.
 - **New voters** can register or pre-register to Vote-By-Mail at your church or online at the California online voter registration website at <https://registertovote.ca.gov/>.
 - **Churches may also re-register voters** so they can receive a Vote By Mail Ballot by downloading and copying applications and returning the completed forms to their local county elections office <https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/vote-by-mail/pdf/vote-by-mail-application.pdf>.
 - **Registration Deadline** The deadline to register or re-register to vote for any election is 11:59:59 p.m. Pacific Time on the 15th calendar day before that election. **If this deadline has passed:**
 - You can submit an application and it will be processed for future elections.
 - You have the opportunity to “conditionally” register to vote and vote provisionally at your local county elections office. Contact your local

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county elections official for more information or visit
<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/conditional-voter-reg/>.

4. **When election season comes**, your church can hold a biblical election forum to discuss ballot measures, propositions and candidates from a theological world view.
 - Invite your congregation to bring their Mail-In ballots and fill them out together at the church.
 - Ask them to invite their friends and family.

5. **Ballot Gathering:**
 - **The church can then collect or “gather” the ballots** and place them into a secure container and turn them all into a local Vote Center or County Registrar of Voters office before or by 8:00 PM on Election Day. Now that ballot gathering is legal, churches can take an active role in preserving Christianity and biblical values.

Tyler & Bursch, LLP provides legal and financial support to our non-profit law firm, Advocates for Faith & Freedom, in defense of religious liberty.

Please feel free to contact our office at 951-304-7583 or visit our website at www.faith-freedom.com for more information about voting with a theological worldview and help with organizing voter registration and election events at your church.

In His Service,



Robert H. Tyler, Esq.

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