

IRS Denies Religious Group Tax Exempt Status; States “Bible teachings” are “affiliated with the Republican party”

First Liberty Institute represents Christians Engaged, Texas nonprofit in appeal

Washington, DC—Today, First Liberty Institute appealed an IRS determination denying tax exempt status to Christians Engaged, a nonprofit organization that exists to educate and empower Christians to pray for our nation and elected officials, vote, and be civically engaged. In a letter issued in May, the IRS argued that Christians Engaged was not eligible for 501(c)(3) status in part because “[B]ible teachings are typically affiliated with the [Republican] party and candidates.”

You can read the IRS denial letter [here](#).

Today’s appeal letter is available [here](#).

“The IRS states in an official letter that Biblical values are exclusively Republican. That might be news to President Biden, who is often described as basing his political ideology on his religious beliefs,” said Lea Patterson, Counsel for First Liberty Institute. “Only a politicized IRS could see Americans who pray for their nation, vote in every election, and work to engage others in the political process as a threat. The IRS violated its own regulations in denying tax exempt status because Christians Engaged teaches biblical values.”

Christians Engaged President Bunni Pounds said, “We just want to encourage more people to vote and participate in the political process. How can anyone be against that?”

Christians Engaged incorporated in July 2019 as a Texas nonprofit corporation “formed exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, or scientific purposes.” From its religious perspective, Christians Engaged provides nonpartisan religious and civic education, focusing on encouraging and educating Christians to be civically engaged as a part of their religious practice. Christians Engaged applied for tax exempt status in late 2019. On May 18, 2021, IRS Exempt Organizations Director Stephen A. Martin denied the application, contending that Christians Engaged “engage[s] in prohibited political campaign intervention” and “operate[s] for a substantial non-exempt private purpose and for the private interests of the [Republican] party.”

In its administrative appeal letter, First Liberty says, “By finding that Christians Engaged does not meet the operational test, Director Martin errs in three ways: 1) he invents a nonexistent requirement that exempt organizations be neutral on public policy issues; 2) he incorrectly concludes that Christians Engaged primarily serves private, nonexempt purposes rather than public, exempt purposes because he thinks its beliefs overlap with

the Republican Party's policy positions; and 3) he violates the First Amendment's Free Speech, and Free Exercise, and Establishment clauses by engaging in both viewpoint discrimination and religious discrimination."

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About First Liberty Institute

[First Liberty Institute](#) is the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

To arrange an interview, contact Lacey McNeil at media@firstliberty.org or by calling 972-941-4453.