



Sent: October 3, 2008

Subject: Religion & Politics – ‘Pulpit Freedom Sunday’

We're hoping you will join us for a blog-conversation! And then take this dialogue back to your campuses.

On Sunday, September 28, thirty-three pastors across the country participated in [Pulpit Freedom Sunday](#), an effort by conservative Christians to challenge federal tax policy and to endorse John McCain for president. Pulpit Freedom Sunday was organized by a conservative legal group called the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) as the first step toward a constitutional challenge to a 54-year-old tax law that prohibits tax-exempt organizations from engaging in partisan political activities. ADF and the participating Church leaders maintain that the law has a chilling effect on their First Amendment rights to free speech. Legal scholars seem to agree that this is not a free speech issue, that any person may endorse a candidate, including a pastor from the pulpit. They simply cannot then turn around and claim tax exempt status.

In a world where politics and religion are hard to separate, however, is it realistic to require sectarian organizations to be nonpartisan? We're posting this question and others on [DemocracySpace](#), a blog managed by our good friends at Everyday Democracy (formerly Study Circles Resource Center).

To help you start this dialogue on your campuses, we point you to three nifty resources: a discussion guide developed by [LaGuardia Community College](#) for community dialogues in the incredibly diversity borough of Queens; another guide developed by Franklin Pierce's [New England Center for Civic Life](#); and to the [Wingspread Declaration on Religion and Public Life](#), available through the Society for Values in Higher Education - a call to campuses to talk about the role colleges and universities in a religiously diverse democracy.

Please join us at the blog and let us know how your own campus dialogues progress.