

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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November 15, 2021

SENT VIA U.S. MAIL AND EMAIL

eoclass@irs.gov

IRS EO Classification

1100 Commerce

St. Dallas, TX 75242-1198

Re: Illegal Politicking by Church

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to alert you to possible illegal partisan politicking by the Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas. We were contacted by a concerned local resident. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 35,000 members across the country. FFRF protects the constitutional separation between state and church, and educates about nontheism.

We were informed that Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas recently hosted an event called “ReAwaken America,” linked to the QAnon conspiracy, that included the political chant, “Let’s Go Brandon.”¹ Video shows hundreds of congregants packing the pews while chanting the phrase—a now well-known anti-Democrat euphemism for “F*ck Joe Biden”—under the apparent lead of those on stage at the church.² We are concerned that the church may have been involved in organizing and sponsoring this event, especially since the church’s pastor, John Hagee, is very politically active and notoriously had his endorsement of presidential candidate John McCain rejected because Hagee reportedly said that “Adolf Hitler had been fulfilling God’s will by hastening the desire of Jews to return to Israel in accordance with biblical prophecy.”³

IRS regulations specify that 501(c)(3) organizations, which include churches and other religious organizations, are prohibited from “[participating in or intervening in] . . . any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.” Rev. Rul. 2007-41, 2007-25

¹ See Ewan Palmer, ‘Let’s Go Brandon’ Chanted at QAnon-Linked Church Event in Texas, Newsweek (Nov. 15, 2021), available at www.newsweek.com/lets-go-brandon-church-texas-qanon-1649141.

² See, e.g., twitter.com/patriottakes/status/1459699199931416581.

³ CNN Politics, *McCain rejects minister’s endorsement* (May 22, 2018), available at www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/05/22/mccain.hagee/.

I.R.B. (June 28, 2007). Politicians and pastors using church services as a campaign tool to promote and endorse a specific candidate is a clear violation of these regulations.

Cornerstone Church appears to have inappropriately used its 501(c)(3) status to intervene in political campaigning, leading congregants in a chant against a politician in clear contemplation of his upcoming candidacy for re-election in 2024. It is a violation of IRS regulations to host political campaign events or to lead church-sponsored chants against one candidate, declaring a clear preference for a specific political candidate over another.

FFRF respectfully requests that the IRS commence an immediate investigation into Cornerstone Church. The IRS should take appropriate action to remedy any violations of 501(c)(3) regulations that occurred or which continue to occur.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Madeline Ziegler".

Madeline Ziegler
Staff Attorney

MEZ:rdj