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BLOG | Posted 02/22/2006 @ 11:13am

Looking for Votes in All the Wrong Places

In 2004, the Bush-Cheney campaign asked conservative activists to send them their church membership directories for political organizing purposes. Although most religious leaders condemned the tactic, some rightwing evangelicals jumped on board.

Clergy reportedly attended GOP-led sessions on how to talk about the election from the pulpit without violating laws regarding tax-exempt institutions. There were requests for church volunteer coordinators to distribute information and speak for the campaign. A group associated with Pat Robertson worked with more than 45,000 churches to help Bush-Cheney win. And churches set up "moral action teams" to get Christian right voters to the polls.

Now the North Carolina Republican Party has once again ripped this page from the Rove Playbook for the 2006 mid-term elections.

Last week, the state party sent out an email asking registered Republicans to furnish it with "as many church directories as you can...in an effort to fully register, educate, and energize North Carolina's congregations," [according to Alan Cooperman](#) of the *Washington Post*.

Party officials claim that they are only engaging in voter registration efforts. But as Rev. Welton Gaddy, President of [The Interfaith Alliance](#), said, "No one bought that defense during the 2004 elections and we won't buy it in 2006 either."

Rev. Robert Prince III, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Waynesville, NC, stated in the *Asheville Citizen-Times*, "I find it disturbing. I don't think it's a good idea...because of church-state type issues." Two local pastors, according to the *Greensboro News & Record*, also objected to the state GOP's practice. Rev. Ken Massey of the city's First Baptist Church said the request was "encroaching on sacred territory."

Mainstream religious leaders and most Americans understand the vital role that separation of church and state plays in protecting our plurality and freedom of religion. But don't count on those like North Carolina's Republican Party to catch on any time soon. After all, it is increasingly clear that Rovean Republicans' commitment to the Constitution is little more than a matter of political expedience.

COMMENTS

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The GOP has put "political" officers in the U.S. Military, a la Soviet Military style, so why shouldn't they put "political" officers in the religious congregations - it's the only fair thing to do.

It's high time that the Dems demanded equal time in the pulpit.

Posted by ORAIBI1952 02/22/2006 @ 12:35am | [ignore this person](#)

EDITOR'S CUT

Katrina vanden Heuvel



Welcome to Editor's Cut. Expect no major manifestos or sweeping pronouncements. This weblog will be more of a running journal recording thoughts on politics, reporting on events, and offering riffs and reflections on what's in the news and what's not (but should be).

Photo Credit: Michael Lorenzini

ARCHIVES

February 2006

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KVH,

It doesn't seem to bother you though when Democrats speak in liberal churches, when the pastors endorse them from the pulpit and encourage their congregations to vote for the Democratic candidate and against Republican politics.

This has occurred hundreds, if not thousands of times in the past 50 years, yet the Nation remains silent when Democrats engage in this activity.

Also, there is nothing illegal about this as long as the lists are available to all political parties and candidates that request them.

Posted by LOVE LIBERTY 02/22/2006 @ 12:38am | [ignore this person](#)

Oraib,

The Republicans would need decades to equal the amount of time Dems have had in the pulpits.

Posted by LOVE LIBERTY 02/22/2006 @ 12:39am | [ignore this person](#)

LOVE LIBERTY:

Not to mention all the FUNERALS of the prominent deceased demoncrats turn into bully pulpits for opposition hatred and demonizing!!!!!!! Al Gore even turned a buddist temple into a money laundering venture! Hypocrisy appears still to be a demoncratic party and liberal mainstay!

Posted by RIO BRAVO 02/22/2006 @ 12:47am | [ignore this person](#)

LL quote - "It doesn't seem to bother you though when Democrats speak in liberal churches...".

The above quote from LL's post illustrates how far along our country has traveled on the road to a religious civil war. Where are the Inquisitors when you need them?

Posted by ORAIBI1952 02/22/2006 @ 12:48am | [ignore this person](#)

Oraib,

It's not about a religious civil war, I was pointing out the hypocrisy which you along with KVH have no problems with.

Posted by LOVE LIBERTY 02/22/2006 @ 1:23pm | [ignore this person](#)

LL,

My point was that we now label our churches, supposedly houses of God where persons of all stripes and manner are welcome, as liberal and conservative churches.

Posted by ORAIBI1952 02/22/2006 @ 1:28pm | [ignore this person](#)

The Constitution says that "the Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion". The example you have given is in no way shape or form in violation of this constitutional provision. Church's can decide to give the list to the parties or they can say no. Both parties can have access to such a list. The only reason you object to such a practice is that Evangelicals will turn out in large numbers and ruin your political plans. Sorry, Evangelicals are voters too and when they perceive that you and other progressives are a threat to most of what they believe, they have the right to show up in large numbers and vote.

Posted by LEN MOSSE 02/22/2006 @ 1:29pm | [ignore this person](#)

also by
Katrina vanden Heuvel

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01/2/2006 issue

Dictionary of Republicanisms
Katrina vanden Heuvel | **Compassionate conservatism** *n.* An expensively cultivated phrase created by a decades-old and well-funded Radical Right program of Orwellian doublespeak.
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"It's high time that the Dems demanded equal time in the pulpit"

Like Jesse Jackson, Sharpton, King funeral...

Come on..is this a joke?

Posted by JOHN MAASCH 02/22/2006 @ 1:31pm | [ignore this person](#)

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