



August 24, 2010

IRS Urged to Investigate Oklahoma Pastor

The Americans United for Separation of Church and State has urged the IRS to investigate Pastor Paul Blair for alleged violation of the federal law that prohibits any church from endorsing or opposing a political candidate in elective public office. The call which was by the watchdog organization in a letter to the IRS last month was precipitated by Pastor Blair's email to his parishioners ahead of a rally for Oklahoma state rep Sally Kern in which Blair encouraged them to make a stand against the bid by the 'homosexual lobby' to take over the elected position.

Rep. Kern and her supporters held a rally called 'Rally for Sally' in June and Pastor Blair is accused of using Reclaiming Oklahoma for Christ, his non-profit organization to raise support and funds for Kern, who is seeking re-election to her fourth term. In his email, Pastor Blair declared that if the gay rights groups succeed in getting their choice of candidate elected, it would serve as a warning shot of all elected officials who defend Biblical values. Pastor Blair went on to further urge parishioners to support Kern regardless of where their constituency might be because once an elected representative takes office his or her voting 'affects all Oklahomans'.

Regarding this matter, the IRS guide states, 'section 501(c)(3) organizations, including churches and religious organizations, are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office'.

In his letter to the IRS, Americans United director Barry Lynn said that when churches violate the IRS law, they should face the consequences. But Pastor Blair has shot back at Lynn and branded him a 'self-anointed tattle tale'. He insisted he never explicitly told anyone who to vote for. Instead, Pastor Blair accused Lynn of going after conservative causes all over the country, causing intimidation in an attempt to silence pastors. He further reiterates that neither he nor his organization have officially supported any candidate nor gone into politics but that they do go into cultural issues.

Lynn disagrees. He says Pastor Blair knows very well that he has violated the law in what he described as 'an open and shut violation'.

Rep Kern is facing Brittany Novotny, a transgender candidate endorsed by gay rights activist Tim Gill, who leads a national movement to elect candidates who will support LGBT issues.