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Possible IRS Violation Complaint Against Minister

A minister running for public office had a complaint lodged against him relating to a recorded telephone message that endorsed his candidacy which was made from a phone number in his own church. Pastor Ed Robb, minister at The Woodlands United Methodist Church, is running for elections to become a member of The Woodlands Township (TWT) board and is supported by state Sen. Tommy Williams who recorded his endorsement in a message to be played over the phone.

The telephone message was played to many residents in The Woodlands on Monday who heard Sen. Williams endorse the candidacy of Pastor Robb for position 4. Pastor Robb is in a 4 way fight for the position against Randy Scott, Deborah Sargeant and Ronnie Taylor.

When the error was discovered, Pastor Robb in his defense stated that the mistake was committed by the company distributing the message who used his church office telephone number instead of his home number. By the time he discovered the error, half the messages were already sent and he immediately stopped the messages and rectified the mistake. After that, Pastor Robb called all the townsfolk who received the message from the church's number and apologized.

The IRS laws prohibit 501 (c) (3) non-profit making organizations like a church from showing support for any candidate running for public office. As such, another candidate (for position 2), Michael Donnelly filed a complaint with the IRS against Pastor Robb. Tax experts also point out that the phone call made using the church office number could be a violation of the non-profit status of the church if it was using its own funds for the call or if the calls were made by church employees during work hours.

However if Pastor Robb made the call himself and did not engage the church employees during work hours or the church money then it would not likely amount to a violation. Pastor Robb insists that the oversight was a genuine mistake and that no resources, manpower or funds from the church were utilized in paying for the call.

But Donnelly did not just file one complaint against Pastor Robb, he actually filed another related one. In his second complaint, Donnelly accused Pastor Robb of a violating campaign activity rules when he allegedly announced his candidacy over the pulpit of his church. IRS laws

stipulate that all speakers running for public office should be given “equal opportunity to participate.” But Pastor Robb clarified that he announced his candidacy as a form of courtesy to the congregation members who know him personally. He insisted that he was running for the township as a citizen rather than as a pastor.

The IRS has not yet contacted Pastor Robb’s Methodist church in The Woodlands.

Darrin T. Mish is a veteran, nationally recognized tax attorney who has focused on providing IRS help to taxpayers for over a decade. He regularly travels the country training other attorneys, CPAs and enrolled agents on how to handle their toughest cases with the IRS. He is highly ranked among the top attorneys in the country, with an AV rating from Martindale-Hubbell and a perfect 10 on Avvo.com. Martindale-Hubbell has also honored him with a listing in their Bar Register of Preeminent Lawyers. He is a member of the American Society of IRS Problem Solvers and the Tax Freedom Institute. With clients on every continent but Antarctica, he has what it takes to solve your IRS problems no matter where you live in the world. If you would like more information about his practice and how he can help you, please call his office at (813) 229-7100 or toll free at 1-888-GET-MISH.