

DEMOCRATS TO CLERGY: SHUT UP OR LOSE TAX-EXEMPT STATUS

In a recent edition of the Christian Science Monitor, Democratic National Committee (DNC) chairman Howard Dean was quoted as saying, "The religious community has to decide whether they want to be tax exempt or involved in politics." We immediately released the following statement to the media:

"Howard Dean's ultimatum to priests, ministers, rabbis and other members of the clergy plays to the stereotype of Democrats as the party of the faithless. Dean knows full well that houses of worship and religious organizations are afforded a tax-exempt status by the IRS for the same reason that colleges, universities, foundations, non-profit organizations and most hospitals are—they service the public good. He also knows that tax-exempt institutions are not allowed to endorse or contribute to candidates for public office, and that a mechanism is in place to punish those who violate this condition. And he must know that members of the clergy do not forfeit their First Amendment right to freedom of speech simply because of their clerical status. So what is his point other than to chill the speech of the clergy?

"This kind of demagoguery is not an isolated instance. For example, on April 19, the DNC announced a new radio ad campaign aimed at the Spanish-speaking community on the subject of immigration reform. The position that the Democrats have staked out on this issue is something many Americans, myself included, feel is superior to that of the Republicans. That is why it is so distressing to read the DNC's statement on this matter: it literally accuses Republicans of supporting a plan that would 'criminalize immigrants, families, doctors, and even churches just for giving communion.' (My italics.) This is a lie—there is not one scintilla of evidence to support the idea that if the Democrats don't win on this issue

then we are faced with the prospect of cops arresting priests for giving Holy Communion to illegal immigrants.

“If Howard Dean is the true voice of the Democratic party on matters religious, they’re in big trouble.”