

MAKE CHURCHES “CAMPAIGN-FREE ZONES”

Now that the presidential season is in full swing, we thought it wise for both the Republicans and the Democrats to consider our proposal: make churches “campaign-free zones.” Here is the text of our remarks:

“For many years now, Republican and Democratic candidates for public office have exploited houses of worship for political capital. Time and again they have brought their campaigns into churches, synagogues and other houses of worship, turning religious services into political rallies. To be sure, they could not have succeeded in doing so without the blessings of the clergy, but this is no excuse: the onus is on the candidates to respect the spirit of the law that governs separation of church and state.

“In the current issue of *Time* magazine, there is a story about John Kerry’s Catholicism. It quotes Kerry saying on [March 27], ‘We have a separation of church and state in this country.’ Also [on March 27] Kerry said, ‘There is nothing conservative or mainstream about crossing the line between church and state.’ Yet the very next day Kerry took a stab at President Bush when he spoke at New Northside Baptist Church in St. Louis, quoting Scripture: ‘It is not enough, my brother, to say you have faith, when there are no deeds.’ Evidently this is now part of Kerry’s stump speech when he campaigns in churches. For example, on March 7, in a Mississippi church, Kerry again quoted James 2:14, ‘What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?’

“Kerry needs to be careful. His voting record is diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Catholic Church on virtually every public policy issue. From abortion and stem cell

research, to gay marriage and school vouchers, Kerry disagrees with the Church. Catholics might rightly want to know why his deeds (voting record) are at odds with his faith (the Church's teachings).

"Bush and Kerry, along with all other candidates for public office, should pledge to keep churches 'campaign-free zones.' The crass use of houses of worship for political capital is not only unethical, it is contemptuous of the religious sensibilities of Americans. It is time for a moratorium."