

# SPEAK UP.

CHURCH INTERNAL AFFAIRS

PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE RIGHTS OF OUR CHURCHES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*“Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘We must obey God rather than men!’”  
Acts 5:29*

**Q** What is interference with church internal affairs?

**A** It is undue interference of, or intrusive supervision by, the government into the right of churches to develop and implement their doctrine, hire ministers to teach that doctrine, control their membership, and set up systems for governing themselves.

**Q** Are church internal affairs (or church autonomy) really threatened in the U.S.—the land of the First Amendment?

**A** Unfortunately, yes. Churches are finding that the government is increasingly encroaching on their rights in a variety of ways nationwide.

**Q** What are some examples of the threat?

**A** Churches have had their sermons, financial records, internal communications, and membership lists sifted by federal agents. They’ve found themselves subjected to discrimination simply for being a religious organization. They’ve had their schools and employees intrusively regulated by the government. One major threat to churches’ rights is the current federal law that prohibits pastors from sharing the full counsel of God’s Word to their congregations when that counsel happens to touch on political matters.

**Q** What are churches’ rights?

**A** As courts and legislatures have repeatedly recognized, churches have many constitutionally guaranteed rights: Churches and church schools have a right to teach and preach religious doctrine and select religious leaders without government interference. Churches have the right to operate their ministries without having the government become unduly entangled with those operations. Churches have the right to speak out without fear of censorship or government-sponsored attacks looking to blunt their religious message.

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**Q** What can churches do to protect themselves from interference with internal affairs?

**A** Churches should get informed about what their rights are and zealously protect them, both to ensure that they can spread the Gospel without hindrance and so that other churches can, as well. ADF has excellent resources available at [SpeakUpMovement.org/Church](http://SpeakUpMovement.org/Church) to educate churches. And if churches find their rights being violated, they can contact ADF at 1-800-TELL-ADF or at [SpeakUpMovement.org/Church](http://SpeakUpMovement.org/Church) to review their situation.

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