

# **A Strong Nation Keeps Religion, Politics Apart**

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**Uyless Black**

# A strong nation keeps religion, politics apart

Second of two parts. The first appeared Wednesday.

By UYLESS BLACK  
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Time and again, the co-mingling of a nation's religion and its politics has proven disastrous to the human race.

I will not waste your time by reciting hundreds of examples. If you are skeptical, just enter "religious wars" in your browser window. Also, search on "theocracy." You will find that theocracy "is a form of government in which a deity is the source from which all

authority derives." Thus, the church is in charge of the state, which means to a great extent, the church is in charge of you. If that idea does not chill your bones, consider the following:



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Will the granting of the right of political speech for America's religions lead to a theocracy? I would be greatly stretching the point to make this claim. The rescinding of the 1954 law — if it occurs, as Congress is now considering — would not turn America into an Iran, but it would likely

lead to the politicization of America's churches, even more so than they already are. It also would lead to further polarization of our nation's politics.

The Joint Committee of Taxation recently issued this statement: "The change could turn churches into a well-funded political force, with donors diverting as much as \$1.7 billion each year from traditional political committees to churches and other nonprofit groups that could legally engage in partisan politics for the first time."

According to <https://mail.aol.com/webmail/std/en-us/suite>: "Critics warn that the change could dramatically

increase untraceable political spending and lead to the creation of [phony] churches to take advantage of the new avenue for political spending."

From my perspective, it would divert, say, the Baptist church's mission from saving souls to saving politicians. It would erode one of the pillars of stability of this nation: the separation of church and state.

It might lead you or me to found our own churches, which would give us a tax-free voice in politics and religion. New churches are founded practically each day in this country. If others can create churches, why can't

citizens form churches to promote their own brand of a politically based religion?

If the 1954 law is rescinded, I favor the taxing of churches. They can't have it both ways. Besides, it is estimated \$71 billion a year is lost because of the granting of tax-free status to churches.

In the opinion of many people, churches are tax exempt with the idea that this exemption helps foster healthy separation between church and state. Of course, other people favor the church being part of the state. If so, which church or religious faction would dictate state doctrine? The philosophy

of my wife's church is quite different from the philosophy of my church. Would the party in power determine which church would be in power? Or like Iran, would the religious leaders determine and set the political policy of the nation, while the elected politicians sat in the back row of the decision making process?

Fatuous questions? Maybe — that is until one faces a situation in which the religious factions of a nation can influence the political agenda of that country. To some extent, this is already happening in America.

# BLACK

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Giving formal political clout to the religious elements in our country would give them undue influence over political and commercial organizations. That is not how America has prospered. The strict separation of church and state in this country, with the state assuming primacy over the church, is one reason America has not gone to war over religions.

We should be wary of the Law of Unintended Consequences. Presently, conventional Christianity is the dominant religion in America. However, this situation is not cast in stone. Agnostics are increasing in number, and so are other religions.

I respect priests and preachers, but I do not want them to tell me how to vote.

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*Uyless Black is an author, researcher and frequent Press analyst and commentator. He and his wife, Holly, reside in Hayden.*