



AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORM

# LEGISLATIVE ALERT

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## **SUPPORT HOUSE RESOLUTION 2357!**

The House of Representatives will soon consider an important bill: the Houses of Worship Political Speech Protection Act (HR 2357). This bill would free religious leaders from the government shackles that try and tell them how to run their own parishes.

**The Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) strongly supports HR 2357 as an extension of free speech, and as a safeguard for religious communities against burdensome tax levies, which cripple the ability of our houses of worship to help their parishioners.**

Existing law restricts the free exercise of religion by telling houses of worship how they can and cannot practice their own faith. Had the current law been enforced earlier in American history, William Lloyd Garrison could not have spoken out against slavery, nor could Martin Luther King Jr. have spoken out against segregation. Existing law prevents religious organizations from challenging injustices, and speaking out to the consciences of the people.

The existing law violates the First Amendment rights of ministers, priests, rabbis, pastors, and all people of faith. The United States is a diverse nation of cultures and faiths that should be celebrated and supported - not stifled. To rob any person of their right to free speech is wrong. But, to do it in the name of the tax code is even worse.

HR 2357 protects religious institutions from the IRS, who has been notorious in the past decade for targeting churches, which challenge certain issues. The IRS slaps targeted churches with a loss of their 501(c) 3 status, adding crippling taxes to our religious communities. The bill moves the burden of proof away from houses of worship and onto the IRS. The current system forces accused churches to prove themselves innocent, whereas HR 2357 puts the burden on the prosecution of the IRS.

The bill won't result in churches or houses of worship being turned into political machines. It makes it easier, though, for people of faith to speak out about the issues that shape their lives and affect their futures.

**ATR Will Consider This Vote For Our Annual Ratings**