

What pastors think about pulpit politics



Russ Jones - OneNewsNow - 10/26/2010 3:40:00 AM



A new study reveals a majority of the nation's Protestant pastors aren't pleased with President Barack Obama's first two years on the job. It also shows they have strong opinions about preaching on politics.

LifeWay Research's [survey](#) indicates that 61 percent of Protestant pastors disapprove of President Obama's job performance, while only 30 percent approve. Meanwhile, nine percent are undecided.

Scott McConnell, director of [LifeWay Research](#), notes that even though the pastors polled have strong political opinions, 84 percent of them believe they should not endorse candidates for public office from the pulpit. "They...hold the pulpit in high regard and they see that as a spiritual place...not a place for political endorsement and going so far as to engage in politics in such a place as that," he reports.



McConnell

These current approval numbers echo the amount of support Obama had from pastors as he entered into the election, which is shown in an October 30, 2008, survey. At that time, 20 percent indicated intentions of voting for Obama, while 55 percent planned to vote for Republican candidate John McCain, leaving 22 percent undecided.

McConnell believes there are issues candidates support that may be important to congregations.

"There are also other levels that pastors can be voicing concern, and that can be at the policy level...if there's a particular piece of legislation that they're taking moral issue with, or a particular government program that is affecting their local community. They can be speaking out related to those issues," the LifeWay Research director points out.

Out of the 1,000 pastors surveyed, party affiliations again reveal differences in opinion on the issue. Among ministers who call themselves Democrats, 84 percent strongly disagree, compared to 61 percent of Republicans who feel that political endorsements should be made. Also, 79 percent of mainline pastors are more likely than 65 percent of evangelical pastors to strongly disagree that endorsements should be made from the pulpit.





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