

Internet Evangelist Challenges IRS Investigation

Internet evangelist Bill Keller is challenging an Internal Revenue Service probe of his organization's tax-exempt status.

Keller, whose Web site Liveprayer.com claims to have over 2.4 million subscribers, is under investigation for possibly violating his group's tax-exempt status last year when Keller criticized then-presidential candidate Mitt Romney by saying, "A vote for Romney is a vote for Satan." More recently, Keller has been claiming that Barack Obama is not a Christian.

However, he insists that his statements should not endanger his organization's status with the IRS. "We did nothing to violate our tax-exempt status at all," he said. "I have every right to educate people on spiritual matters and I have every right to deal with issues from a spiritual point of view. I never endorsed a candidate and I never told people who to vote for and who not to vote for."

A group known as the Alliance Defense Fund recently announced an initiative to challenge the ban on political endorsements by tax-exempt organizations. Meanwhile, Senate Finance Committee leaders have been probing various ministries for possible violations of the ban.

"The IRS has always been involved in keeping track of people who may be violating their tax exemptions," said Keller. "But we have not in any way violated our exemptions and we are looking for the IRS to give us a clean bill of health. I gave them all the information they were looking for and, if they aren't satisfied, they should charge us so we can take it to the next level."