

Assas

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I. Define the following terms (/20)

1. Composition and role of the Senate
2. Electoral vote and popular vote
3. Presidential nominations
4. Federal and state jurisdiction

II. Read the text and answer the following questions. DO NOT USE QUOTES from the text (/30)

In Tax Debate, Gift to Religious Right Could Be Bargaining Chip

By KENNETH P. VOGEL and LAURIE GOODSTEIN, NOV. 26, 2017, nytimes.com

WASHINGTON — For years, a coalition of well-funded groups on the religious right have waged an uphill battle to repeal a 1954 law that bans churches and other nonprofit groups from engaging in political activity.

Now, those groups are edging toward a once-improbable victory as Republican lawmakers, with the enthusiastic backing of President Trump, prepare to rewrite large parts of the United States tax code as part of the \$1.5 trillion tax package moving through Congress.

Among the changes in the tax bill that passed the House this month is a provision to roll back the 1954 ban, a move that is championed by the religious right, but opposed by thousands of religious and nonprofit leaders, who warn that it could blur the line between charity and politics. 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 an estimate by the nonpartisan congressional Joint Committee on Taxation.

The Senate will begin voting as early as midweek on its own version of the sweeping tax rewrite, which leaves the ban untouched, and differs in other key ways from the House version. The Senate bill has yet to gather enough support from Republicans to pass along party lines (...) If the bill passes the Senate, lawmakers will still need to resolve key differences between the House and Senate bills, including whether to make the tax cuts for individuals permanent, as the House bill does, or temporary, as in the Senate legislation. (...)

With time running out for Republicans to deliver a major legislative victory after nearly a year of impasse on the party's top agenda items, lawmakers appear poised to agree to last-minute changes and tweaks to try to ensure the bill's passage so it can be delivered to President Trump by Christmas. (...)

The need for a legislative victory is giving comfort to those on the religious right that the final bill sent to the president will include the House language, which was drafted with significant input from evangelical groups.

The sudden movement toward their goal appears to trace back to a January 2016 meeting that Mr. Trump, then a presidential candidate, had convened at his Trump Tower office in Manhattan with evangelical leaders he was courting.

That meeting helped lead to a campaign pledge by Mr. Trump to repeal the ban, known as the Johnson Amendment, and set the stage for its inclusion in the tax code overhaul that passed the House.

Critics warn that the change could dramatically increase untraceable political spending and lead to the creation of "sham churches" to take advantage of the new avenue for political spending, which — unlike donations to candidates, "super PACs" and party committees — would allow donors to deduct contributions.

Thousands of religious leaders, as well as groups and denominations like the United Methodist Church, the National Council of Churches and the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, say rolling back the Johnson Amendment would be the biggest threat to the stability and mission of their organizations in a generation. Charities and houses of worship whose members, staffs and boards of directors now span the political spectrum predict that they will be pressured to take sides in political campaigns. Nonprofits and religious groups that receive government funding worry that politicians or donors will pressure them for endorsements in exchange for continued funding.

"It will bring the partisan divide to our doors," said Jatrice Martel Gaiter, the executive vice president of external affairs for Volunteers of America, a ministry and social service provider that receives about 70 percent of its funding from the government. "If the Senate doesn't stop this, there will be havoc in the nonprofit sector."

Christian conservative leaders contend that the provision in the House bill was drafted narrowly to avoid any such abuse, and they cast the issue as a matter of constitutional rights, rather than politics.

Both sides agree that repealing or dialing back the Johnson Amendment seemed improbable at best as recently as a year and a half ago. That was when Mr. Trump's surprising embrace injected new life into it, and helped spark an alliance that benefited his campaign and the religious right.

The Johnson Amendment traces its origins — and its name — to Senator Lyndon B. Johnson and his 1954 re-election campaign. Concerned that his electoral prospects could be diminished by attacks from a pair of conservative nonprofit groups, he slipped a provision into a tax code overhaul to bar certain nonprofit groups from participating in political campaigns.

Nonetheless, conservative Christian leaders have increasingly seized on the Johnson Amendment as an example of what they see as government hostility to religion in the public square.

"The law has a chilling effect on free speech," said Michael Farris, the president of the Christian conservative legal group Alliance Defending Freedom.

In 2008, Mr. Farris's group began an effort to overturn the Johnson Amendment in court through an annual civil disobedience protest called "Pulpit Freedom Sunday." (...) Other

opponents began efforts to repeal the ban in Congress. Bills to do so were supported by powerful Christian conservative groups, including Mr. Perkins's Family Research Council, the Christian Coalition and the Traditional Values Coalition, according to lobbying filings. A more nuanced approach emerged from an interfaith commission convened in 2011 by another nonprofit group, the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, which suggested leaving the Johnson Amendment intact but allowing churches and other nonprofit groups to support or oppose candidates in the "ordinary course of an organization's regular and customary" activities, provided the amount spent on such activity was "de minimis." (...)

1. How does this article illustrate the legislative process in the USA?
2. Briefly describe what the Johnson amendment is.
3. Comment on the underlined sentence.

III. Essay (/50)

Describe and comment on the following cartoon:

