

Poll: More want churches quiet on politics, less faith talk by politicians: A slim majority

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A slim majority of Americans, including rising numbers of conservatives, say churches should stay out of politics, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.

Fifty-two percent of Americans say they think that houses of worship should not express their opinions about political and social matters, while 45 percent say they approve of such expression.

The center said August 21 that this marks the first time since it started asking the question in 1996 that respondents who want churches to stay out of politics outnumber those with the opposite view. Conservatives, especially, have reconsidered the issue, with 50 percent saying congregations should stay out of politics. Only 30 percent voiced that opinion in 2004.

The survey also showed a slight increase in the percentage of Americans who say they are bothered by politicians' discussing their religion. Forty-six percent now say they are uncomfortable with that kind of religious talk, compared to 40 percent in 2004.

Researchers found a sharper increase in the number of respondents who view the Democratic Party as friendly toward religion, from 26 percent in 2006 to 38 percent two years later. More than half—52 percent—view the Republican Party as religion friendly, compared to 47 percent in 2006.

The study, conducted by the Pew Research Center and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, was based on telephone interviews from July 31 to August 10 with a national sample of 2,905 adults. The margin of error for the total sample is plus or minus 2 percentage points. *-Religion News Service*