

Third group exits Christian Coalition: Declares national group has drifted from conservative principles

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Alabama's chapter of the Christian Coalition of America has dropped out of the national organization, declaring that it has drifted from its founding conservative principles. It was the third state affiliate to leave the national group.

Although both sides said they wished each other well, the split was not entirely amicable. The president of the Alabama splinter group defiantly predicted a mass exodus of other state chapters and the possible organization of a separate Christian grassroots group with a national presence in Washington.

"All of us are taking care of the home battlefronts now, but we'll be swimming up the Potomac River soon," said John Giles, president of the Alabama organization.

Roberta Combs, president of the national organization, was unapologetic and accused the Alabama faction of disobeying legal advice and jeopardizing its tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service.

Combs said the Alabama group recently sent out its 2006 candidate survey without getting it cleared by the Washington office, as is required under a recent legal settlement with the IRS. A January letter from the national organization's attorney warned state chapters that their affiliation could be revoked if the policy is not followed, Combs said.

"We will have another organization in Alabama. We will rebuild in Alabama," Combs added.

A rift between Giles and Combs opened in 2003 when Combs campaigned in support of Governor Bob Riley's tax reform plan despite the Alabama chapter's opposition. Giles said the issue divided and confused Christian voters in Alabama. The Iowa chapter left the national group in March, followed by the Ohio chapter in July. –

