

IRS: Dobson did not violate tax rules in 2004 endorsements: Focus on the Family keeps tax-exempt status

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The Internal Revenue Service has cleared Focus on the Family chair James Dobson after an investigation into charges that he had violated IRS rules by endorsing President Bush and other Republicans in the 2004 elections.

Dobson hailed the IRS conclusion in a broadcast on his syndicated radio program September 10 and read from documents he received from the agency.

“Our examination revealed that Dr. Dobson’s reported remarks did not occur in publications of Focus on the Family, did not occur at functions of Focus on the Family, and did not involve Dr. Dobson suggesting that he was speaking as a representative of Focus on the Family,” the IRS said.

The federal agency spent almost a year auditing Dobson’s ministries after receiving a 99-page request in November 2005 from Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, which accused him of endorsing Republican candidates and requested the revocation of Focus on the Family’s tax-exempt status.

In his recent broadcast, Dobson argued that the Washington watchdog group’s intent was to try to frighten clergy and other nonprofit organizations from addressing moral issues.

“I think the purpose for this was not only to see if they could damage us and maybe shut us up and take us out but to scare every pastor and every nonprofit that’s out there,” Dobson said.

Naomi Seligman Steiner, deputy director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, said Dobson’s charge was “ludicrous.” CREW wants to make sure “that every nonprofit in this country obeys both the spirit and the letter of the law,” she said.

The IRS sent letters reaffirming the continuing tax-exempt status of both Focus on the Family and Focus on the Family Action, its political arm, which has greater latitude to be involved in lobbying activities. Dobson chairs both organizations. – *Religion News Service*