

What kind of "growing movement"?

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

September 14, 2011

The *LA Times* has an interesting [article](#) about evangelical pastors' involvement in political mobilization. Tom Hamburger and Matea Gold don't do enough to prove their now-more-than-ever hook--that pastors whipping votes in Iowa and elsewhere are "part of a growing movement of evangelical pastors who are jumping into the electoral fray as never before"--but it's still an important story to follow as we slog through yet another election season (in which the religious right is [still not dead](#)).

After reading the article, however, I'm not much wiser about where this activist energy is coming from. First the authors tell me this:

This new activism has substantial muscle behind it: a cadre of experienced Christian organizers and some of the conservative movement's most generous donors, who are setting up technologically sophisticated operations to reach pastors and their congregations in battleground states.

But later we get this:

Religious leaders have long been active in political causes. . . . But the current awakening is different. It springs from the grass roots - small and independent churches - and is fueled by emails and YouTube videos.

Okay, so which is it? Grassroots activism or savvy, well-funded mobilization from the top down?