

Cuban-born bishop likens ploy to Castro: Castro asked for names of church members too

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In a Fourth of July message to clergy of the Diocese of Southeast Florida, Episcopal Bishop Leo Frade expressed “grave concern” that the Bush-Cheney campaign has asked volunteers to use church member lists for political organizing.

“I am alarmed by any suggestion of providing the names of church members to any specific political group,” said the Cuban-born bishop. “I saw this request made by dictator Fidel Castro at the beginning of his regime, and his persecution of churches that refused. It was one of the first of his attempts to control the country by force.”

Frade said it was his duty as bishop “to warn you of the grave threat this kind of request poses to the relationship of trust within our community of faith, as well as to our legal status as a religious institution.”

The bishop added that congregations “as part of our responsibility as Christians” should still consider “hosting debates that are balanced, distributing voter guides that are not partisan in content and sponsoring nonpartisan voter registration drives.”