

# [***Megachurch Pastor Admits He Broke the Law Telling Church to Vote Republican***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BF1-TJX1-DY68-13TH-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 552 words

**Byline:** Andrew Stanton

**Highlight:** A California pastor removed himself from the pulpit to endorse Steve Garvey in the state's Senate race.

**Body**

The pastor of California megachurch who endorsed GOP [*Senate*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/senate?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) candidate Steve Garvey during a recent sermon admitted that doing so constituted a violation of laws barring churches from supporting political candidates.

Jack Hibbs, pastor of Calvary Chapel Chino Hills in Chino, California, urged his congregation to support Garvey, noting that he believes God is wanting a candidate who is "pro-life." California voters are set to head to the bills on March 5 to make their pick in California's Senate primary, in which Garvey remains the leading Republican candidate. More than 10,000 people attend the church, according to its website.

"How are you voting, regarding our upcoming local vote? I want to publicly, right now today, encourage all of you to vote for Steve Garvey. You've got to vote for Steve Garvey. I just remembered, it's against the law for me to say that in the pulpit," Hibbs said.

Hibbs then left the pulpit to make his plea for Garvey, noting that the endorsement comes from his capacity as a citizen, rather than from the church.

"As a public citizen, Steve Garvey is not only one of the greatest baseball players of all time, but we want Steve Garvey to represent us in the Senate, and so Steve Garvey is the only guy on the ballot," he said.

Churches are barred from engaging in certain political activities to maintain their status as tax-exempt nonprofits. While pastors are allowed to discuss political issues at the pulpit, churches may not endorse or donate to specific political candidates. Pastors, however, may endorse political candidates as a citizen.

*Newsweek* reached out to Hibbs for comment via email.

Video of Hibbs' remarks, first posted to X (formerly [*Twitter*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/twitter?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)) by Right Wing Watch, sparked some criticism on social media, with some arguing churches that engage in ***politics*** should be taxed. One X user named Ramon Caudle wrote, "Behind the pulpit or not, he's still addressing his congregation in a political manner. Take away his tax exemption!"

"Tax. Them. Already," wrote attorney Bradley P. Moss.

Garvey, a former baseball star, has earned support from many [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) to take on [*Democrats*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/democrats?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) in the Senate race in the state, which is known for its embrace of more progressive policies. However, Garvey may [*face a key hurdle*](https://www.newsweek.com/republicans-blocked-california-senate-election-1871586?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) in making it to the November general election.

California is among the few states that use the "jungle primary" system, in which all candidates, regardless of their political party, will run on the same ballot during the primary election in March. The two candidates who receive the most votes will then go on to the general election, creating a challenge for Republicans as the state's voters select two Democrats to run in November.

Representative [*Adam Schiff*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/adam-schiff?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) is the favorite to advance to the general election, but polls show that both Garvey and Representative Katie Porter vying for the second spot with no clear leader to join Schiff. This means Republican candidates could face being locked out of the election.

Regardless of whether Garvey makes it to the general, the election is not viewed as competitive as California remains one of the most Democratic states in the country. In the 2020 presidential election, the state gave President [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) more than 63 percent of the vote, while only about 34 percent of Californians backed Trump.

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2354612/pastor-admits-endorsement-broke-law.jpg)

**Graphic**

pastor admits endorsement broke law

SeventyFour/ iStock / Getty Images Plus

A stock image of a man reading the Bible in a church. A California pastor who endorsed GOP Senate candidate Steve Garvey at the pulpit admitted that doing so broke the law.

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