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## **CLS DEFENDS CONGREGATIONS AND CLERGY OF ALL FAITHS FROM HISTORIC ATTACK ON THEIR ABILITY TO SERVE**

***“This is not only alarming, it is shameful. Our society should not cripple religious congregations, but encourage them to continue to do good by serving their communities,” explained David Nammo, Executive Director of Christian Legal Society.***

Christian Legal Society filed a brief today to help protect clergy of all faiths from a higher tax bill. A group hostile to religion seeks to take away the housing allowance for clergy, a tax provision that is deeply embedded in the fabric of our national life.

If the government were compelled to end the housing allowance, religious congregations would be forced to absorb a significant economic hit to their clergy. In order to help their clergy withstand the significant impact of higher taxes, congregations would need to divert funds from their ministries to the homeless and others in need,

As CLS explains in its friend-of-the-court brief, between 61 and 81 percent of American congregations rely on housing allowances to help their clergy live on modest incomes. Many retired ministers rely significantly on the housing allowance to supplement their modest pensions. Loss of the housing allowance would disproportionately harm smaller congregations that lack the economic ability to absorb a significant increase in taxes for their clergy. The effects on congregations with modest resources will be particularly severe in urban areas, where housing is particularly expensive.

This lawsuit, brought by a group hostile to religion, threatens leaders of all faiths who sacrificially serve their communities each and every day. It also threatens every American who benefits (whether one realizes it or not) from the economic health that faith communities bring to their communities by helping those in need secure jobs, avoid substance abuse, and raise their families.

The brief was researched and written by Professor Tom Berg and Kacie Phillips, a student in the Religious Liberty Appellate Clinic at St. Thomas University School of Law (Minneapolis). Joining CLS on the brief were: the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability; the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America; the National Association of Evangelicals; The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod; the Council of Churches of the City of New York; and the Queens Federation of Churches.

### ***About Christian Legal Society:***

***The Center for Law & Religious Freedom, the advocacy ministry of Christian Legal Society, defends and advances all Americans’ inalienable rights to religious freedom and life in the public square. For forty years, the Center’s mission has focused on the protection of religious freedom and the sanctity of human life in the courts, legislatures, and the public square. The Center pursues a pluralistic vision of a free civil society that respects all Americans’ religious freedom and free speech. The Center also believes that strengthening international religious freedom depends on Americans’ robust commitment to domestic religious liberty. To that end, the Center works with organizations across the political and religious spectrum to defend religious freedom, freedom of speech, and the sanctity of human life.***

**CLS Brief: [Gaylor v. Mnuchin Friend-of-the-Court Brief](#)**