



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on February 24, 2012

Religious Broadcasters Urge IRS Probe of Media Matters

Media Matters has come under fire after the Daily Caller exposed the liberal watchdog group for accepting a \$50,000 grant to monitor and probe religious outlets. The Christian Post first reported that the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB), an association of broadcasters and Christian communicators, was anticipating an investigation by the Internal Revenue Service into whether or not Media Matters violated its 501(c)(3) status when it collected money from a special interest group to scrutinize religious conservatives.



NRB Executive Board Treasurer Janet Parshall (left) questioned Media Matters' attacks on religious broadcasters — such as Focus on the Family founder Dr. James Dobson and the late Jerry Falwell — asserting that she would “be curious to see if someone is going to vet this organization [to ascertain] that in fact they haven't violated their 501(c)(3).”

Under [IRS requirements](#), organizations under 501(c)(3) status “are restricted in how much political and legislative (lobbying) activities they may conduct.”

“If you start looking into who the donors are, where the funding mechanisms that started coming into Media Matters [came from], you realize that these are not tabula rasa, these are not blank slates, these are people who have [a] particular worldview, a particular agenda legislatively, politically, and they want Media Matters as someone to help shape and mold the debate,” Parshall affirmed, indicating that the organization will be unmasked as a front group for progressive advocates.

The organization openly acknowledges its [political agenda](#) and the practices it takes to correct “misinformation” in the media:

Media Matters for America put in place, for the first time, the means to systematically monitor a cross section of print, broadcast, cable, radio and Internet media outlets for conservative misinformation — news or commentary that is not accurate, reliable, or credible and that forwards the conservative agenda — every day, in real time.

Media Matters works daily to notify activists, journalists, pundits, and the general public about instances of misinformation, providing them with the resources to rebut false claims and to take direct action against offending media institutions.

The dispute in question is a [\\$50,000 grant](#) delivered in 2006 from the liberal Arca Foundation “to support a Religious Broadcasting Project to expand the monitoring and fact checking of religious broadcasts.” Since the grant was awarded, Media Matters has published at least 65 articles about the Christian Broadcasting Network, with titles such as “Is there any tragedy Pat Robertson won't exploit?” and “Robertson blamed [Ariel] Sharon stroke on policy of 'dividing God's land.'”

“I'm wondering if Media Matters needs to re-state in its 990 to the IRS, ‘Oh yeah, our charitable purpose is to conduct Spanish inquisitions of Christian broadcasters and drive them out of the media



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market place,” Parshall said in an interview.

“We take ourselves very seriously,” she added Monday. “We tell our people to ascribe to high ethical, financial standards and also good reporting techniques.”

The *Daily Caller* recently reported on another [controversy](#), finding evidence that Media Matters has worked closely with the White House and the Democratic Party:

Founded by [David] Brock in 2004 as a liberal counterweight to “conservative misinformation” in the press, Media Matters has in less than a decade become a powerful player in Democratic politics. The group operates in regular coordination with the highest levels of the Obama White House, as well as with members of Congress and progressive groups around the country. Brock, who collected over \$250,000 in salary from Media Matters in 2010, has himself become a major fundraiser on the left. According to an internal memo obtained by TheDC, Media Matters intends to spend nearly \$20 million in 2012 to influence news coverage.

Donors have every reason to expect success, as the group’s effect on many news organizations has already been profound. “We were pretty much writing their prime time,” a former Media Matters employee said of the cable channel MSNBC. “But then virtually all the mainstream media was using our stuff.”

A spokesperson for the Arca Foundation claimed that grant recipients largely have the authority to decide how to disperse the funds; however, Arca would sometimes document how the money should be used. And according to IRS guidelines, 501(c)(3) non-profits are restricted from endorsing political stances.

Parshall indicated that many religious groups are also under the 501(c)(3) tax status, so if Media Matters isn’t investigated, the government would be representing an explicit double standard. “I find it interesting and problematic that [Media Matters is] supposed to be categorically a 501(c)(3). So, what happens to those of us particularly in the world of religious broadcasting and church organizations who work within the parameters of a 501(c)(3) knowing full well what we can and cannot do and [that we] will meet the likes of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State if we cross that trip wire and go over to the other side.”



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