

Evangelical leaders seek broad moral agenda in Cizik replacement

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WASHINGTON (ABP) — Fifty-nine evangelical leaders signed a letter requesting that whoever is chosen to replace ousted lobbyist Richard Cizik at the National Association of Evangelicals carry on Cizik's commitment to a moral agenda broader than opposition to homosexuality and abortion.

In a letter to NAE President Leith Anderson dated Dec. 16, the evangelical leaders expressed gratitude for Cizik's "broad Christian moral agenda that has helped define American Evangelicals' public witness."

Cizik resigned Dec. 10 as the NAE's vice president for governmental affairs after saying in a radio interview his view on gay marriage was shifting and he now supports civil unions for same-sex couples.

Anderson [said](#) that statement "did not appropriately represent the values and convictions of NAE and our constituents."

The letter from evangelical leaders acknowledged the NAE's right to choose its own spokesperson, yet urged that Cizik's replacement support "a broad Christian moral agenda" including not only the family and right to life but also human rights, peace and the environment.

Baptist signers included David Gushee, president of Evangelicals for Human Rights; Jonathan Merritt, spokesperson for the Southern Baptist Environment and Climate Initiative; Carey Newman, director of Baylor University Press; and Glenn Stassen, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary.

Another evangelical leader, Jim Wallis of *Sojourners*, said the Religious Right is already using Cizik's departure in attempt to steer the organization toward a narrower social agenda.

"I personally trust Leith Anderson's and the NAE Executive Committee's commitment to the wider evangelical agenda beyond just abortion and gay marriage, but also feel deeply saddened by these events," Wallis said in a statement.

Wallis urged NAE leadership "to stay on the path they have chosen and resist the efforts of those who would again seek to narrow the evangelical agenda in unbiblical ways and make it again subservient to a conservative political agenda."