



# Depth Perception™

Commentary from Design For Ministry™

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It is far too normal to hear congregational leaders grumble about the fiduciary duties of congregational life. They protest at the cost of an audit, howl at the thought of paying for access to copyrighted material, wince at the cost of raising funds, refuse to pay for consultation, and think receipting gifts of \$250 or more applies to other nonprofits but not to their congregation.

When grumbling wins the day, and it all too often has, it sets the stage for misbehavior. Misbehavior leads to legislation, such as the legislative package now underway in Washington. Charles Grassley, Republican Senator from Iowa and chairman of the Finance Committee, was recently reported by *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* as saying:

*"There are increasing indications that the twin cancers of technical manipulation and outright abuse that we saw develop in the profit-making segments of the economy are now spreading to pockets of the nonprofit sector" (4 April 2005, p. 27).*

Senators are poised to put laws into effect that would increase the watchfulness over the affairs of all nonprofits. There is nothing to indicate the religious organizations would be excluded.

Grumbly congregational leaders are prone to think their congregation would never be subject to such regulation, yet they want all the benefits of having nonprofit status. It is both ridiculous and ungodly to expect that it can be had both ways.

Grumbly leaders who take such an attitude are a clear indication of something I heard the musician and

teacher, John Fischer, once say:  
*"They have their prepositions wrong. They are IN the world and OF it."*

*"When grumbling wins the day ... it sets the stage for misbehavior. Misbehavior leads to legislation ..."*

— mark l. vincent