Televangelist builds $4M home on Lake Keowee

SALEM (AP) — A religious broadcaster is building a $4 million home on Lake Keowee at the same time that the ministry has cut jobs.

Inspiration Networks CEO David Cerullo is building the 9,000-square-foot home.

Inspiration Networks has drawn scrutiny for up to $26 million in incentives it won from South Carolina to move from Charlotte to Indian Land in Lancaster County. The network's revenues are expected to approach $100 million, largely donations from people who are told God favors those who donate.

Cerullo has said 80 cents of each dollar that is donated is spent to spread the Gospel.

In addition to laying off workers, the ministry froze wages and stopped making contributions to 401(k) retirement accounts. The thermostat on the network's new building was cut to 65 degrees during the winter.

A network spokesman did not respond to calls and e-mails requesting comment on the house. Cerullo defended his $1.5 million in compensation in a March interview and said he rejected recommendations that he be paid more.

"If they've got these kinds of assets, does the state really need to offer ... tax breaks?" asked Don Weaver, president of the S.C. Association of Taxpayers.

Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, is investigating the finances of six other televangelists. IRS rules bar nonprofits from paying "unreasonable compensation" to officials.

Pennsylvania resident Gregg Hill donated $5,000 to the network before he was disenchanted with its fundraising. He questions why Cerullo and his wife, who now live in a 12,000-square-foot house in south Charlotte, need such a house.

"He doesn't need to be living in a $4 million house," Hill said. "There are people who could be helped with that money."



Associated Press

Televangelist David Cerullo's house is under construction in Salem, alongside Lake Keowee.