



THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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UNLEVEL PLAYING FIELD: Barriers to Participation by Faith-Based and Community Organizations in Federal Social Service Programs

"The paramount goal is compassionate results, and private and charitable groups, including religious ones, should have the fullest opportunity permitted by law to compete on a level playing field, so long as they achieve valid public purposes.... The delivery of social services must be results-oriented and should value the bedrock principles of pluralism, nondiscrimination, evenhandedness, and neutrality."

--President George W. Bush

January 29, 2001

Background

On January 29, 2001, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13198, creating Centers for Faith-Based & Community Initiatives in five cabinet departments-Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Education (ED), Labor (DOL), and Justice (DOJ).¹ The Executive Order charged each Center to conduct:

a department-wide audit to identify all existing barriers to the participation of faith-based and other community organizations in the delivery of social services by the department, including but not limited to regulations, rules, orders, procurement, and other internal policies and practices, and outreach activities that either facially discriminate against or otherwise discourage or disadvantage the participation of faith-based and other community organizations in Federal programs.

This report summarizes the initial findings from the five cabinet Centers on barriers impeding religious and grassroots organizations that seek to serve the common good in collaboration with the Federal Government.

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¹ The Department of Justice has established a Faith-Based & Community Initiatives Taskforce. For convenience, the four Centers and the Justice Taskforce will all be called Centers in this report.