

## **‘Separation of church and state’ versus church welfare?**

by Randy Bright <http://www.tulsabeacon.com/?p=4189#more-4189>

We’ve been listening to the “separation of church and state” mantra for decades now, as liberals and progressives have been trying to push God out of anything that is funded with federal tax dollars.

But guess what? Obama wants to get your church involved the government handout business, according to recommendations in a 176-page report entitled, “President’s Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships”.

In an article entitled, “Obama’s Faith-Based Programs Pushing Global Warming, Climate Change, Green Issues,”, author Warner Todd Huston explains that the intent of the program is to use the faith community to push green initiatives. The article is available on Andrew Breitbart’s “Big Government” website.

Huston quotes Weekly Standard author Meghan Clyne, who said, “Apparently the president’s council envisions the “partnership” between government and religious institutions as a means of spreading the administration’s environmental warnings, rather than just a way to help churches feed the hungry and clothe the poor. Faith-based organizations, the report notes, can take “a prominent leadership role in influencing policy, education and action in those areas”...The council hopes the new EPA faith office will also help churches and other nonprofits improve “access to financing,” including “establishing revolving loan programs or working with utility companies to help finance greening building projects.”

The ultimate aim of all this government-supported retrofitting is clear: “Regional staff would work to engage local faith- and community-based groups to help meet Obama administration targets for greening buildings and promoting environmental quality.”

The Council targets “faith- and community-based organizations” as places where social services can be disbursed more efficiently, saying, “far too many eligible families and individuals do not receive the benefits to which they are entitled.”

The answer to solving poverty, according to this report, is to streamline government services by utilizing existing churches and other nonprofits who are already providing charitable services.

One recommendation by the Council to Obama was, “We urge the Administration to look to promising practices involving faith- and community-based organizations that are providing multiple-benefit access, and access to income support programs, through single platform data collection, application, and benefit management technology...”

Another recommendation was to “Build accountable partnerships between the Obama administration and faith-and community-based organizations directed toward the explicit and shared goal of significantly reducing and finally putting an end to poverty in America.”

One means of accomplishing this is to place people in green jobs. The report states, “To ensure an inclusive Economic Recovery, Federal programs that create jobs and support training must ensure that the most disadvantaged and disconnected are prepared for and placed in available workforce opportunities, particularly any new green jobs created and / or incentivized by economic stimulus funding.”

Does the recruitment of churches to dispense government benefits or the financing of “green” projects for church infrastructure give Obama any concern about the separation of church and state?

Apparently not. In a campaign speech in July 2008, Obama confirmed his intent to leave President Bush’s Faith-Based Initiative programs in place, saying, “Make no mistake, as someone who used to teach constitutional law, I believe deeply in the separation of church and state, but I don’t believe this partnership will endanger that idea – so long as we follow a few basic principles. First, if you get a federal grant, you can’t use that grant money to proselytize to the people you help and you can’t discriminate against them – or against the people you hire – on the basis of religion. Second, federal dollars that go directly to churches, temples, and mosques can only be used on secular programs. And we’ll also ensure that taxpayer dollars only go to those programs that actually work.”

So how would a church separate their own funds from government money, whether through a grant to feed the homeless or a loan to “green” their building?

The answer will eventually be, you can’t. And that is when the church who makes the mistake of mixing their own ministries with government programs will cease to function as a church. Churches should stay completely away from this transparent program.

This is all about government gaining control over churches. More on this next week.

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