

How Firm A Foundation? Comparing The Bush and Obama Faith-Based Initiatives

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Introduction

When President Barack Obama issued an executive order in February 2009 establishing a new faith-based initiative, he was renewing and slightly revising a policy initiative that was originally established under President G.W. Bush. Initially, the Obama Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships initiative (FBNP) largely followed the thrust of the Bush Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI), with what appeared to be only minor differences. However, in the second year of the Obama administration, the FBNP was poised to take on a very different set of foci with the potential to establish a significantly redefined faith-based initiative, and to incorporate the faith community in a new round of partnerships with the federal government. This possibility emerged from a set of far reaching recommendations by the Advisory Council established by President Obama to study ways of improving and strengthening partnerships between government and faith-based and community organizations. The recommendations of the Advisory Council promised to substantially redirect the core thrust of what had been some groundbreaking dimensions of the FBCI. What one president had established by administrative fiat, another was poised to substantially alter by similar fiat. While the Obama FBNP reflected the continuing appeal of the idea of formally incorporating the faith community in partnership with the federal government, it also suggested that the evolution of these partnerships would move far beyond the original notions of the Bush FBCI of incorporating local congregations and small, faith-based organizations in government efforts to aid the poor and needy. The comparison of the two initiatives illuminates the limits of change that may accrue to administrative policymaking, and the vulnerability of presidential preferences when anchored in the sub-optimized use of executive orders.

Policymaking and Public Management via Executive Orders

Executive orders are a particularly unique means of presidential policymaking and stand in sharp contrast to conventional legislative statutes. Conventional legislative statutes are passed by both houses of Congress and signed into law by the President. Although the President may play a highly influential role in the conventional legislative process, he is nonetheless a partner in that process. In contrast, executive orders constitute unilateral action by the president, in the absence of a tangible congressional role. Indeed, executive orders are frequently last-resort administrative measures utilized in efforts to circumvent congressional opposition or disinterest. Sometimes they are simply occasions for the assertion of presidential power, and presidential policy preferences. In all cases, executive orders constitute a seizure of political possibilities. With executive orders, presidents choose which policies to enact and the mode of their enactment. This “policymaking by other means” has been on the rise in recent decades. Analysts have found

that presidents have issued executive orders at a frequency of about one per month over the past several decades. Mayer concludes that “Presidents turn to executive orders as a governing and policy tool when they need administrative flexibility and agenda control” and that “presidents issued more executive orders when they had congressional majorities and fewer when the opposition party was in control” (Mayer 2001). In the use of executive orders, presidents are able to exercise “power without persuasion.” Executive orders carry the full force of law, and with them presidents “create or modify laws, procedures, and policy by fiat” (Mayer 2001).

In terms of their execution, executive orders primarily require action by the executive branch. However within the context of federalism, executive orders can serve as formal mandates for state and local governments and can incorporate non-governmental organizations into policy processes as well (Mayer 2001; Cooper 2002; Howell 2001). Overall, executive orders usually make for a more expansive executive branch role in policymaking and its execution. Analysts generally define two major classifications of executive orders: those that focus on the management of administrative affairs, and those that are designed to be instruments for the actual creation of policy (Mayer 2001; Mayer and Price 2001; Cooper 2001; Howell 2003; Shull 2006). In both categories, executive orders are important tools for the assertion of presidential choice taking without having those policy preferences subjected to the vagaries of inevitable compromises that characterize the conventional legislative process.

Executive orders can also provide a significantly unobstructed view of the president in the singular role of public manager. A view of how the president chooses to apply the resources of government to societal problems and to the management of his policy agenda. In the routine responsibilities for the operation and management of government, the president emerges as the chief public manager in the execution of policies made by the Congress. These laws are executed across institutional processes that are more or less pre-existing, permanent elements of government. Hence, in executing the law, a president routinely has to play the policy and administrative hand that he has been dealt. This can be much less the case with executive orders. The dual functions of choice taking and public management are perhaps the most important elements in presidential use of executive orders. The use of executive orders allows the president broad discretion in choosing how to apply the resources of government to societal problems, and they allow him to design the policy and administrative apparatuses for the achievement of desired policy goals. For these reasons the two faith-based initiatives are particularly useful in illuminating aspects of presidential choice taking and public management.

The Comparative Analysis

In comparison to major federal programs, the Bush and Obama faith-based initiatives are both relatively small programs, yet their development and execution provide interesting insights into significant dimensions of presidential policy making. The comparative analysis presented in this

article focuses on four key factors in that regard: the core objectives that are manifest in each initiative; the approaches to defining policy in each initiative; the choices made in terms of policy development in the Bush FBCI and the outcomes of those choices; and the shifting foci and emergent redefinition of the role of faith-based organizations in federal partnerships under the Obama FBNP. The comparative analysis illumines the risks that derive from the sub-optimal use of executive orders in establishing presidential policy choices and their resulting vulnerability to easy redirection. The analysis begins with a review of the structuring and establishment of the Bush FBCI, its accomplishments, its shortcomings, and its legacy in terms of major accomplishments and expectations about what might have become the focus of future faith-based initiatives. It is against this backdrop that we can better appreciate the original policy goals of the Obama FBNP; its somewhat unique use of a rather diverse group of stakeholders in policy development; the expanded set of policy proposals for a substantially broadened and revamped faith-based initiative; and the emergent restructuring of partnerships between the federal government and the faith community under the FBNP. The analysis concludes with some observations on how the Bush FBCI and the Obama FBNP may be remembered for their respective policy accomplishments and uses of administrative powers.

The Bush FBCI

Building on The Promises of Charitable Choice

The Bush FBCI represented the second phase of a policy initiative designed to establish a new relationship between government and faith-based organizations. Charitable Choice had been the original iteration of this initiative. Charitable Choice was established in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Act of 1996 (PRWORA), commonly referred to as the Welfare Reform Act. The Charitable Choice provision allowed state and local governments to contract with religious organizations and to otherwise retain their services through instruments such as vouchers, and certificates on the same basis as nongovernmental organizations without requiring them to relinquish their religious character. Religious organizations were no longer prohibited from displaying religious symbols in service provision facilities, nor were they required to provide facilities separate from those that supported their religious activities. Charitable Choice did prohibit the constraining of the religious freedom of service clientele and required religious providers to inform clients of alternative, non-religious service providers upon client request or pertinent objections. Charitable Choice set aside the constitutional significance of the religious identity of organizations. The determinative standards shifted from emphasis on the identity of the funded organization to an emphasis on the content of funded activities and a requirement that federal funds be used for secular purposes (Lupu and Tuttle 2008).

Charitable Choice also set aside the then prevailing prohibition against government funding of “perversely sectarian” organizations such as local congregations. The Supreme Court

had ruled that government funding of “perversely sectarian” organizations was unconstitutional and in violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment (*Bowen v. Kendrick*, 487 U.S. 589 (1988) at 612). This ruling, subsequent statutes, and administrative rules and regulations were interpreted to prohibit almost all government funding of religious organizations. However, some analysts such as Lupu and Tuttle argue that Charitable Choice captured the essence of “a paradigm shift” that had taken place in first amendment jurisprudence between 1980 and 1999 that had established a new norm of equal opportunity for religious organizations (Lupu and Tuttle 2002). Efforts to expand Charitable Choice beyond PRWORA had confronted strong resistance on the issue of allowing religious organizations to hire staff on the basis of religious preferences and affiliations with the use of government funding. Prevailing law had restricted the hiring of co-religionists to privately funded activities despite what analysts argue was a range of practices to the contrary (Brownstein 1999; Davis 1999; Monsma 1996). The conflict around religious selectivity in hiring contributed to the necessity to make use of executive orders in establishing the FBCI.

Structuring the FBCI as a Policy Tool

In structuring the FBCI, President Bush’s initial actions were to construct the foundational bureaucratic and administrative apparatus through which the initiative would be implemented. On January 29, 2001, President G.W. Bush issued Executive Order 13199 creating the White House Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives (WHOFBCI). Also issued on that day was Executive Order 13198, which stipulated that WHOFBCI would coordinate five Centers for Faith-based and Community Initiatives housed in Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Departments of Justice, Labor, and Education. This set of cabinet agencies was selected for the initial rollout of the FBCI because they were the “five major cabinet agencies concerned with social policy.” Subsequent executive orders issued in 2002, 2004, and 2006 required equal protection for faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs), and expanded the FBCI to include the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security, and the Small Business. The final bureaucratic infrastructure covered 11 cabinet and executive level agencies with the WHOFBCI at the center. The programmatic coverage of the FBCI extended to the full range of contracted services and grants-funded activities implemented by these agencies.

The executive orders laid out a bureaucratic and administrative structure for the FBCI, but did not define its policy content. The policy orientation was set forth in two documents issued by the Bush administration in the early days of the FBCI. These two documents spoke to the ideational context from which the FBCI emerged and to its broader aims. The first document was issued on January 30, 2001, and was titled “Rallying the Armies of Compassion” (White House 2001a). This document launched the vision behind the FBCI, set forth its larger goals, and

sought to make the case for new partnerships that would engage faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) in solving social ills. The second document was titled “An Unlevel Playing Field” and was released just seven months into the FBCI (White House 2001b). It presented the justification for making rule changes that would alter the legal standing and environment for FBCOs in federal contracting and grant making. In the foreword to the *Armies of Compassion* document, President Bush called it a blueprint for his “agenda to enlist, equip, enable, empower, and expand the heroic works of faith-based and community groups across America.” Under the heading of “the problem,” the document sets forth a generalized needs statement that underlay the FBCI:

Fifteen million young people who are at risk of falling prey to crime, drugs, etc. which could impair their chances of reaching productive adulthood; 1.5 million children with at least one parent in prison; one-half million children in foster care; more than one million babies born to unwed mothers in 1997; more than one of six American families with children who live on annual incomes of \$17,000 or less. *“A great and prosperous nation can and must do better. Americans are a deeply compassionate people and will not tolerate indifference toward the poor. But they also want compassionate results, not just compassionate intentions”* (White House 2001a, 2) (emphasis added).

Some of the general aims of the FBCI were stated as follows:

- Reforms must make federal assistance more effective and more tailored to local needs, and must make the federal government a partner with faith-based and community organizations that are trusted by those who hurt.
- Discrimination by the federal government against faith-based organizations will be eliminated and the initiatives of these organizations and secular nonprofits will be applauded and aided;
- “The goal is to energize civil society and rebuild social capital, particularly by uplifting small non-profit organizations, congregations and other faith-based institutions that are lonely outposts of energy, service, and vision in poor and declining neighborhoods and rural enclaves” (White House 2001a).

The FBCI goals envisioned a repositioning of FBCOs to play an expanded and enhanced role in social service delivery through participation in existing agency programs. There was a strong implication that FBCOs would initiate unique, and perhaps more effective approaches to addressing social problems, that would contribute to the larger goal of “transforming lives” (White House 2001a). This expectation was captured in the notion of “the faith factor” (Dionne, Jr. and Dilulio, Jr. 2000; Dionne, Jr. and Chen 2001; Bane and Mead 2003; Formicola, et al 2003).

The partnerships at the heart of the FBCI represented the primary operationalization of the concept of “compassionate conservatism” and pointed to the policy and ideological roots of

the FBCI. For example, the FBCI background documents reflect Marvin Olasky's arguments that true compassion requires up-close, hands-on assistance and involvement rather than the directing of aid to the poor and needy via third party bureaucracies (Olasky 1992). Olasky was an influential advisor to President Bush and Republican strategists in developing the concept of compassionate conservatism that fused the values of faith and morals to social policy concerns (Olasky 2000). Similarly, some sentiments from the early debates on welfare reform were incorporated in the FBCI. Conservative analysts Peter Berger and Richard Neuhaus had argued that organizations such as churches play a key role as mediating organizations, interfacing between citizens--especially the low income and needy--and the impersonal behemoths of public service bureaucracies. Churches and voluntary associations were among the institutions that should be more imaginatively recognized in public policy (Berger and Neuhaus 1996). Twenty-five years after their initial articulation, the Berger and Neuhaus argument was incorporated into formal public policy in the FBCI.

The social policy content of the FBCI was rather loosely defined. The FBCI emphasized a broad mix of social issues that could be linked to existing programmatic coverage provided by executive branch agencies. These issues also reflected a large swath of outreach activities engaged in by many churches and community organizations. Some priority areas cited included at-risk youth, ex-offenders, homeless populations, substance abusers, those with HIV/AIDS, and welfare-to-work families. Also appearing on some lists was housing assistance, job training, eldercare, domestic violence prevention, after school and adult education services, community development, and strengthening marriages and families. The policy foci of the FBCI potentially provided a wide range of opportunities for FBCOs to receive federal funding to support their disparate social services interests.

Implementing The FBCI

The implementation of the FBCI was anchored around two distinctive courses of action: changing the environment within federal agencies to render them more receptive to the participation of small, new entrant FBCOs; and preparing this class of organizations to be competitive in the federal funding arena. As part of the first course of action and some six months into implementation of the FBCI, the Bush administration released a second background report titled "An Un-level Playing Field" that provided policy context for the FBCI. The Un-level Playing Field report was the result of an audit of the utilization of FBCOs by the five federal agencies within which FBCI centers had been initially established. This report provided justification for agency rule changes that would support a reformed contracting and grants environment for FBCOs. The audit findings included the following:

- The network of local congregations and small nonprofit organizations--both religious and secular--that provide vital safety-net support in the American welfare state are mainly

ignored in federal funding. Instead, a relatively select group of large social service and health nonprofits receive the bulk of federal funding.

- A pervasive assumption that “the wall of separation” metaphor automatically disqualifies all but the most secularized providers, leads to federal resistance to collaborating with religious groups and thus the actual exclusion of faith-based organizations despite the absence of any constitutional or statutory basis.
- Federal agencies sometimes require faith-based social service charities interested in partnering with government to surrender their long-held freedom to define their religious mission in hiring like-minded, like-hearted staff, in violation of congressional intent and contrary to a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court.
- Charitable Choice Provisions of PRWORA had been ignored.
- A federal grant making process which unfairly favors previous recipients of grants and frequently required formal 501(C)(3) status without statutory authority (White House 2001b).

The full range of rule changes needed to address the findings of the rules audit required specific changes at the level of individual agencies. The WHOFBCI issued an annotated summation of final rules implemented by some seventeen federal agencies and major programs as part of the FBCI (White House 2006a).

The second course of action in the implementation of the FBCI entailed preparing new entrant FBCOs to be effective participants in the competitive federal funding arena. As a class of organizations they faced major obstacles of lack of information, lack of know-how, and insufficient organizational capacity. “The routine design and operation of federal competitive and formula grant programs are overwhelming and off-putting to smaller-scale organizations, both sacred and secular, and are intimidating or create nearly insuperable barriers for small or new groups” (White House 2001b). Many routine funding requirements such as maintaining complex financial management systems, establishing indirect cost rates, and mastery of lengthy and legally intricate grant applications were found to easily tax or exceed the capacity of many FBCOs.

To address these challenges, the WHOFBCI and each of the agency FBCI Centers sponsored a series of repeating, regional conferences and workshops in major cities across the country to provide information about government funding processes and opportunities, and to build organizational readiness. Program representatives and technical experts were dispatched to provide information and direct instruction. Agency websites were revamped and made user friendly with easy links to related federal programs and sources of support. Agencies issued new guidebooks for FBCOs that offered ideas and suggestions for how they could leverage their interests and resources to secure federal funds in addressing community problems. The Bush White House published several written resources to assist grassroots groups in navigating the federal grants system (White House 2006b; White House 2006c; White House 2006d).

Preparing The Armies of Compassion

The Bush administration sought congressional appropriations to support those activities that were targeted to enhancing the readiness and capacity of FBCOs. The Compassion Capital Fund (CCF) was created in 2002 and placed under the Administration for Children and Families in HHS. The CCF did not pay for direct social service provision but focused only on building the capacity of FBCOs. The CCF initially administered two programs. The Targeted Capacity Building Program made onetime awards up to a maximum of \$50,000 to increase the capacity of FBCOs to provide social services in CCF priority areas. The CCF Demonstration Program funded intermediary organizations that in turn provided capacity building assistance to FBCOs that served as a bridge between the federal government and community organizations. The intermediary organizations provided technical support and made sub-awards to grassroots organizations to assist them in “capacity building that produces measurable impact and that results in more sustainable organizations.” Sub-awards ranged from \$1,000 to \$20,000. In FY 2005, forty-four intermediary organizations were funded nationwide (Health and Human Services 2006). The programmatic efforts of the CCF were supported by The National Resource Center (NRC), which was established to ensure that intermediary organizations were fully equipped to assist grassroots organizations. The third CCF program, Communities Empowering Youth (CEY) was funded in FY06 with the goal of building capacity and sustainability in organizations that focused on providing alternatives to gang involvement, youth violence, child abuse and neglect, and the general fostering of positive youth development.

For the six-year period from its establishment in FY02 to FY07, the CCF received \$286.55 million in congressional appropriations (U.S. Congressional Research Service 2006). The capacity building efforts of the CCF contributed to heightened awareness of the FBCI at state and local levels. The targeted Capacity Building Program awarded 1,200 grants between FY03 and FY07. Between FY02 and FY07, the Demonstration Program funded 159 primary grantees that in turn, reached some 4,100 intermediary organizations in 37 states and the District of Columbia. Between FY06 and FY08, the CEY program funded 131 projects. Information and training conferences sponsored by the WHOFBCI and agency FBCI centers reached in excess of 1,000 religious and secular organizations nationwide (Wright 2009).

Measuring The Success of The FBCI

The central goal of the Bush FBCI was to level the playing field for FBOs generally, and especially for smaller, new entrant FBCOs in ways that would enhance the participation of this class of organizations in federal funding. In the absence of congressional appropriations dedicated to supporting actual social service provision under the FBCI, realization of the goals of the FBCI largely required redirecting the normal annual appropriations of federal executive branch agencies. Hence a key measure of the success of the FBCI was the federal funding

patterns of FBCOs under FBCI initiatives. There are two primary sources of data on these funding patterns: reports released by the WHOFBCI, and reports from The Religion Roundtable of the Rockefeller Institute of Government at SUNY Albany under a commission by the Pew Charitable Trusts. Almost all available funding reports provide data on federal competitive, non-formula programs, those funds most open to competition at the federal level. From the start (FY02), analyses documented a general trend of increases in the number of federal grants awarded to FBCOs and increases in total dollars awarded to these organizations. While it is reasonable to assume that many of these organizations had already been receiving funding, it appears that the FBCI resulted in an increase in the overall availability of funding. The level of funding under the FBCI continued to grow at a relatively impressive pace. For FY03-05, funding to FBCOs increased from roughly 8.1 percent of available federal funding to 10.9 percent in key FBCI agencies (Table 1). The FY05 total was \$2.15 billion. In FY06, federal funding to FBCOs reached a high of 11.2 percent, with a grand total of \$7.5 billion for the 4-year period FY02-FY06 (White House 2006b).

See Table 1

The relatively impressive funding patterns are in keeping with a new administration initiative that had the enthusiastic support of the President. However, despite significant achievements in FBCO funding under the FBCI, WHOFBCI data for FY06 compared funding of FBOs and secular non-profits (SNPs) and showed a continuing preponderance of funding to secular nonprofits over FBOs of 64.4% to 11.2% (Table 2).

See Table 2

In regard to awards to FBCOs, analyses by the Religion Roundtable found that except for a small niche of programs, federal funding under the FBCI favored larger, national FBCOs, (i.e., more complex bureaucratic organizations), over local congregations, and over local or regionally based independent religious organizations. The Religion Roundtable also found “modest and inconclusive” evidence of increased funding opportunities to FBCOs that were new grantees or truly new entrants (Monteil and Wright 2006). In sum, under the FBCI, the traditional pattern of federal funding in support of social welfare related goals had not shown a substantial shift that favored the targeted class of organizations, i.e. small, new entrant FBOs.

The Legacy of the Bush FBCI

The legacy of the Bush FBCI is a mixed one, though one aspect of that legacy is highly noteworthy. Its most profound legacy is that a new, specialized federal procurement policy is now in place. The administrative rule changes made in creating a level playing field at the federal agency level will make for a lasting legacy of a reformed procurement environment for FBOs. Building on the promises of Charitable Choice, the FBCI broke new ground in

establishing a reformed environment that provides new and equal standing for faith-based organizations in accessing government contracts and grants. It has opened the door to a more diverse population of FBOs beyond the historic participation of large, national, FBOs. The rule changes that undergird this achievement have become permanent elements of federal procurement policy and are not likely to be overturned. However the FBCI will have little real legacy in terms of social policy. The FBCI did not set forth new social policy, nor did it modify or redefine any existing social policies. The FBCI identified a very broad frame of social problems within which FBCOs could anchor their funded activities. It was, thereby, mainly social policy by implication, and by its incorporation of the choices made by FBCOs in their individual and collective funded activities.

The greater vulnerabilities of the Bush FBCI largely ensue from the sub-optimized use of executive orders as a tool for anchoring presidential policy preferences. Of the two major classifications of executive orders, President Bush chose to structure a set of orders designed mainly for the management of administrative affairs—administrative rule changes and adjunctive organizational changes--and not for the making and sustentation of substantive policy—beyond indirectly creating a specialized procurement policy. Analysts have found that the constitutional and statutory authority on which executive orders are based are quite broad and provide the president with an array of substantive policy options (Howell 2003; Mayer 2001). For example, with the use of executive orders, President Bush could have chosen to make actual social policy in one or several key areas by amending existing policies or by defining a new set of policies. He could also have established a specialized commission or a new agency to oversee a broader FBCI agenda. Similarly, President Bush could have requested the issuance of a secretarial or departmental order—in which case a cabinet secretary, under the president’s directive, issues the equivalent of an executive order—to achieve the same goals.

Citing data compiled by David Lewis (2003), William Howell states that in the Post-WWII era 43 agencies have been created by executive orders (including the National Security Agency, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration), and 177 by secretarial or departmental orders (including National Marine Fisheries Services, and the Defense Intelligence Agency) (Howell 2003). Lewis argues that presidents can successfully lock in their policy preferences through insulating structures such as commissions or agencies that are established by executive decree (2003). Howell argues that neither the Congress nor the judiciary have mounted successful challenges to such broad uses of presidential authority (Howell 2003). Not only can the tools of administrative policymaking provide effective means for a president to establish his policy preferences, when used to their optimum effect, they can be used to institutionalize those preferences as well.

The Obama Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

The Early Phase of The Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

At first glance, the Obama FBNP would not be readily characterized as original, or particularly innovative. Indeed, the FBNP initiative was established by an executive order that essentially eliminated some wording from the initial Bush executive order and inserted new wording. The name was changed, in what seems more of a technicality than a distinguishing difference. What had been the Faith-Based and Community Initiative became the Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, and community organizations became neighborhood organizations. Much of the old organizational structure was retained with a White House Office of FBNP (WHOFBNP) and FBNP centers housed in 11 cabinet agencies. The overall mission remains the same of connecting each agency FBNP center to local faith-based and neighborhood organizations (FBNOs). One major difference is that the Obama FBNP makes no references to anything equivalent to the Armies of Compassion and only implicitly hints at the notion of “mediating institutions.” Thus, a lot of what might be called the political thought that undergirded the Bush FBCI is missing from the FBNP.

Candidate Obama made a promise to establish a revamped faith-based effort, including major changes pertaining to constitutional questions of allowing faith-based organizations to hire on the basis of religious affinity. The Obama executive order reaffirms that “Faith-based and neighborhood organizations are close to the people and trusted by them, and must be strengthened in their ability to deliver services effectively in partnership with government at all levels, and with other private organizations, while preserving fundamental constitutional commitments.” The absence of more ideologically toned language is not surprising. While the Bush FBCI was fueled by an underlying political movement and linked to a more closely aligned constituent base, the Obama initiative does not have similar origins or political anchors. The FBNP rests largely on an Obama campaign promise, and perhaps expectations that were raised by the Bush FBCI precedent. The original articulation of the Obama FBNP entailed a smaller and more specific agenda than the FBCI, and a more limited policy focus in terms of issue areas, including:

1. Strengthening the role of community organizations in the economic recovery,
2. Finding common ground in reducing unintended pregnancies, supporting maternal and child health, and reducing the need for abortions,
3. Promoting responsible fatherhood and strong communities; and,
4. Promoting interfaith dialogue and cooperation (White House 2010a).

While the number of priority areas is fewer than under the Bush FBCI, they are each quite broad in scope, and open to highly varying interpretations and ensuing programmatic activities. The

stated goal is that the key priorities are to be carried out in working closely with the cabinet secretaries, the 11 FBNP agency centers, and the Corporation for National and Community Service (White House 2010a).

In the first year of the Obama Administration, the FBNP proceeded in ways similar to the earlier Bush efforts in regard to actions to improve the readiness of small FBNOs. For example, the FBNP made use of the Compassion Capital Fund (CCF) as a primary mechanism to support prospective new-entry FBNOs in strengthening their ability to pursue federal funding. Under the FBNP, the CCF has been used to support two grant programs. The Communities Empowering Youth Program (CEY) funded experienced organizations to build the capacity of their collaborating partners in joint efforts to provide alternatives to gang involvement, youth violence, and child abuse and neglect, a set of priority concerns under the FBNP. In FY 2008, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) provided over \$30 million in continuation awards to 131 CEY grantees. However, no funding was available for new awards in FY 2009 (Health and Human Services 2010a).

Similarly, in 2008, over \$17.5 million was awarded in continuation awards to 37 intermediary grantees under the ACF Demonstration Program. The awards continued to fund intermediary organizations to provide training and technical support to smaller, new entrant organizations. No funding was available for new awards in FY 2009 (Health and Human Services 2010a). As happened under the Bush FBCI the FBNP placed a major focus on training and technical assistance programs that were conducted by individual executive agencies in its start up phase. For example, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offered an extensive schedule of training and technical assistance conferences in major cities across the country for 2010. Workshops focused on topics such as effective business practices, practical marketing, financial management, collaboration and community coalition building, and organizational development and assessment (Health and Human Services 2010b). The Department of Education developed a technical assistance web cast for “novice grant seekers” (Department of Education 2010). And so it went, with the FBNP seeming to repeat the agenda of the Bush FBCI in focusing on capacity building for small, new-entrant FBNOs. It is worth noting that some of the initial focus may have been attributable to priorities set in budget carry-overs from the Bush administration.

New Stakeholders and a New Way Forward

There are two key differences in the Obama FBNP organizational structure that appear to be consequential in defining the role and thrust of the FBNP. One, the FBNP provides for an Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships to be comprised of 25 members appointed by the President, with each panel of members serving a one-year term. The role of the Advisory Council is to advise on best practices for FBNOs in service delivery;

evaluate the implementation of policies relating to FBNOs; and to make recommendations to the President on policies, programs and practices “that affect the delivery of services by such organizations and the needs of low-income persons in communities at home and around the world.” Secondly, the WHOFBNP and the Advisory Council are housed under the purview of the Domestic Policy Council (White House 2010b). This organizational placement may indicate an intention to involve the religious community in advising on issues beyond funding and social service delivery to include issues having to do with religious liberty and other policy concerns.

The composition of the original Council membership offered clues to the likely policy and issue direction of the FBNP. Advisory Council members were leaders of traditional religious denominations, major religious charities, and major secular non-profits; heads of U.S. based, internationally focused, non-governmental organizations (NGOs); representatives of major faith traditions; and academicians (White House 2010c). In effect, the composition of the Advisory Council suggested that the FBNP was tilting towards a more pluralistic definition of the faith community and a stronger embrace of large charitable organizations, and away from an earlier focus on congregations and small FBCOs. The Advisory Council issued a major report of recommendations in March 2010 and its contents (discussed below) were highly suggestive of how the Obama FBNP would be shaped as it fully assumed its own identity. Three things seem to have shaped the thrust of the Council’s recommendations: President Obama’s stated directives to the Council as it began its work; the composition of the Council and the expansiveness of interests it represented including strong international linkages; and the apparent aspirations for deeper and more meaningful connections between the interests of Advisory Council members and the work of the full range of cabinet agencies incorporated in the FBNP. The result is an emergent picture of a faith-based initiative that is more integrally connected to key administration policy issues beyond social services provision; more international in its focus; more focused on the work and interests of large, established religious and secular organizations; and less concerned about advocating for small, new entrant FBNOs.

The Advisory Council’s Report was titled, *A New Era in Partnerships: A Report of Recommendations to The President* (White House 2010d). President Obama asked the Council to focus on making recommendation in six priority areas: Economic recovery and domestic poverty; environment and climate change; fatherhood and healthy families; global poverty and development; interreligious cooperation; and reform of the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (White House 2010d, V) The inclusion of issues such as environment and climate change, and global poverty and development represented significant expansions beyond the originally stated FBNP policy areas and would be matched in some cases by similar expansiveness in the meaning given to each of these areas by the Council. The Council conducted its work via a set of six taskforces, one for each priority area. Interestingly, the membership of the taskforces was expanded beyond the formal membership of the Council. The Report is silent on how this expanded membership came to be. However, the result was that the Council’s Report of Recommendations had a rather broad set of attributed authors beyond the

formal membership of the Council. The discussion below is based on the author's summation of the core thrust of findings and recommendations presented by each taskforce. The discussion summarizes in turn the findings and recommendations from each taskforce.

1. Economic Recovery and Domestic Poverty

The recommendations from this taskforce contained the most aggressive advocacy in support of the needs of underprivileged Americans. The taskforce called for "an accountable partnership" between government and FBNPs that would seek to cut the poverty rate in half in ten years and end child poverty by 2015, linking the former goal to a statement by candidate Obama at a Compassion Forum in April 2008. Other recommendations were anchored in the sobered reality shared by social policy advocates as informed by their direct work with the poor and needy. They called for: a redefinition and updating of the federal poverty definition and relevant guidelines; deliberate efforts to reach 100 percent of eligible populations in key social program areas; development of universal eligibility criteria and applications for multiple social programs; and more single site, co-locations of multiple social services. Other recommendations would place FBNPs in funded support of providing transportation, housing, job training, and educational needs of the poor and needy (White House 2010d, 1-26). It is fair to say that the recommendations of this taskforce envisioned an almost unlimited role for FBNPs in combating conditions of domestic poverty.

2. Fatherhood and Healthy Families

The recommendations from this taskforce can be characterized as a call for national consciousness-raising about the importance of responsible fathers to the wellbeing of children and families, communities, and the nation. The recommendations were directed towards increased awareness and public support for fatherhood and family issues. For example, the taskforce recommended that the White House host an annual Fathers' Day celebration to honor "exemplary" fathers. They also challenged governmental departments to form working groups to assess how their respective policies affect the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children. They urged continued funding of fatherhood and healthy marriage grants (originally begun under the Bush FBCI) by HHS, and expanded funding of similar efforts by other federal agencies in support of military and incarcerated fathers, and fathers involved in the child support system. Footnotes accompanying this section of the Report draw attention to differences among Council members on sensitive issues related to family, parenthood, and parenting relationships. It was explicitly noted that some Council members were opposed to any programming that included governmental support for "other strong positive relationships" which might include extramarital sexual relationships; and that some members were opposed to programs supporting "family planning" if it meant government funding of contraception. The taskforce applauded the fact that they were able to reach significant common ground in the recommendations that were set forth (White House 2010d, 29)

The taskforce recommendations also marked the vital connections between responsible fatherhood and issues of domestic violence, and the contingent links of fatherhood to issues of unemployment, underemployment, and poverty. The taskforce called on President Obama to continue to affirm and model the importance of a committed father and husband in the lives of children. The Report noted the work of the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC) that collects and shares information about policies, trends, research findings, promising practices, and emerging lessons from “the field of Responsible Fatherhood.” The NRFC is a service of the Administration of Children and Families in HHS, and provides grant funding in support of responsible fatherhood, strong marriages and families. Perhaps anticipating considerable public skepticism about the contents and benefits of fatherhood programs, the taskforce recommended investment in high quality evaluation of responsible fatherhood programs “in order to move the field toward greater evidence-based programming” and increased public support (White House 2010d, 27-52)

3. The Environment and Climate Change

The recommendations from this taskforce seem suggestive of the Advisory Council’s efforts to seek meaningful involvement in a policy issue of popular saliency. Several recommendations focus on claims of the unique positioning of FBNOs to engage in public education around environmental sustainability and energy efficiency; and to pursue partnerships with state and local governments to retrofit and “to green” buildings. They called for the establishment of an Office of FBNP at the EPA headquarters and in its regional offices. Other recommendations are anchored in the international linkages of some taskforce members. For example, they pointedly call for the funding of U.S. based NGOs and private voluntary organizations (PVOs) to develop and implement international climate change adaptation objectives in efforts to protect vulnerable populations globally. This recommendation reflected the strong presence of both secular and faith-based NGOs on the Council and its taskforces, and it is one of the more thoughtfully stated recommendations from this taskforce. The taskforce makes a passing statement about the moral dictate of environmental protection but the argument was left undeveloped (White House 2010d, 53-68). Overall, the narrative in this section conveys a strong sense that the Council’s thinking on environment and climate change was somewhat undeveloped.

4. Interreligious Cooperation

The taskforce defined interreligious cooperation to refer to “activities and projects that draw participants from more than one faith tradition, denomination, spiritual movement or religion, and often include secular participants and organizations as well.” The taskforce also stated firmly that it recognized “that all U.S. government funding must be predicated on achieving secular results; that funding must be awarded based on neutral performance-based criteria and must be open to faith-based and non-faith-based entities on equal terms; and that its recommendations should be understood in accord with these principles.”⁵⁵ The overall context of recommendations by this taskforce is strong advocacy for more communications across faith lines and for valuing

the diversity of religious communities that are present in American society. This section also conveys a sense of urgency about involving the domestic Muslim community in U.S. engagement with Muslim communities abroad. Thus, the taskforce seems to place a special focus on U.S. international and global affairs and a new way forward for America (White House 2010d, 69-72).

The taskforce made strong references to declarations contained in Obama's campaign speeches and the President's Cairo speech. To wit, several bold recommendations are set forth. The taskforce recommended the appointment of senior staff for multi-religious engagement in each of the major agencies tasked with international affairs, including the Department of State, USAID, The National Security Council, and the Department of Defense (DOD). They recommended the establishment of ongoing communication between the White House and the Office of Special Representative to Muslim Communities at the Department of State, and Muslim American community groups on global Muslim engagement efforts. And, they called for the hosting of town-hall meetings across the country to include representatives from the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, and faith-based and community groups to discuss citizen concerns about civil liberties (White House 2010d, 73-94). The taskforce envisioned the integrating and valuing of America's religious and cultural diversity as advancing the common good.

5. Global Poverty and Development

The recommendations of this taskforce reflected the presence and strong voice of top leaders of U.S. based international NGOs such as CARE, Bread for the World, Catholic Relief Services, World Relief, American Jewish World Service, InterAction (a coalition of U.S.-based international NGOs) and World Vision. While some U.S. based international NGOs are indeed religious organizations, for many among the general public, their presence and activities may not immediately come to mind when thinking about faith-based organizations. Other U.S. based NGOs are wholly secular organizations with missions that include development, humanitarian and gender work, and work in specific geographic regions. The Report asserted that as a class, most international NGOs maintain a strong focus on global poverty and related issues. These organizations supplement the work of formal U.S. development assistance in many instances, and as well, they do work in communities not reached by formal aid assistance. The taskforce made the strong reminder that in their work around the globe, the U.S. NGO community is entrusted and heavily funded by millions of private American donors across the political spectrum. The Taskforce asserted that the work of NGOs deserves greater recognition from the U.S. government and a more robust collaboration with that government. The discussion from this taskforce indicates a new presence of international NGOs "at the table" of the Obama FBNP, and suggests that it is a bold, and assertive presence (White House 2010d, 95-102).

The lead recommendation from this taskforce was for the Obama Administration to launch a public campaign to promote a new era of engagement with the American public to end

global poverty and to promote sustainable development. They asserted that U.S. development efforts are overdue for reform. That while U.S. programs and policies do good, “they are hobbled by mixed motives, weak and fragmented institutions, and excessive control from Washington.” They applauded the issuance of multiple Presidential directives in 2009 to conduct cross-agency reviews of U.S. development and national security policies, and diplomatic efforts in regard to U.S. global development policy. They also argued for funding that stresses long-term presence and investments in developing countries, and argued that funded entities be able to demonstrate a record of working with poor communities in developing countries. They questioned the work of private, for-profit organizations; recommended set limits on the role of the DOD in development work; point to a range of administrative regulations that inhibit NGO work abroad; and called for the appointment of a Faith-Based and Civil Society Engagement Officer at every USAID mission to engage in outreach and partnerships with local, in-country organizations. They asserted that: “reinvigorating and leveraging the relationship of the U.S. government and the U.S. NGO community is essential to more effective U.S. engagement in the world” (White House 2010d, 103-116).

6. *Reform of the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships*

In regard to the office that is at the center of the FBNP, President Obama directed the Council to make recommendations for: “improving the operations of the WHOFBNP and agency centers; strengthening the social service partnerships that government forms with nongovernmental providers; and strengthening the constitutional and legal footing of these partnerships” (White House 2010d, 119). The Council’s Report generally notes the widely divergent views of the members of this taskforce, including some views questioning whether government should fund any activities of religious organizations, and some others questioning whether government should only refrain from funding certain kinds of religious entities. These disagreements were not resolved.

The taskforce on the WHOFBNP began with the recommendation for “a strategic review of government supported technical assistance and organizational capacity building efforts.” They urged support for only the most effective providers. This was one of the most important recommendations from the Advisory Council. It represented a major shift from the emphases of the Bush FBCI and reflected the dominant presence of large, faith-based and non-profit organizations on the Advisory Council. This recommendation also called into question the prior implicit assumption that any and all FBCOs could be made ready for effective participation in federally funded partnerships. The second recommendation from this taskforce was equally interesting and also addressed a perceived weakness of the Bush FBCI. The taskforce recommended the establishment of learning communities and an information exchange among all organizations that are involved in social service partnerships so that “*the value of funding moves beyond the services provided in individual grants to a more systemic level of impacts*” (emphasis added). This recommendation seems to acknowledge a vital truth: that the funding of disparate activities of varied FBCOs in even a small set of policy areas does not make for

effective policy nor significant policy impacts. These two recommendations suggest that the Obama FBNP is likely to benefit from recognizing deficiencies in the implementation of the Bush FBCI, and is poised to move beyond the FBCI focus on “raising up the armies” of small, FBCOs (White House 2010d, 117-152).

The taskforce also called for a more deliberate strategy to incorporate the activities of state, county, and city officials in the FBNP. This concern reflected what was a persistent problem for the FBCI. The problem was significantly a result of the absence of the formal intergovernmental mandates that are integral components of most conventional legislative statutes. Both the Bush and Obama faith-based initiatives have relied on more voluntary state and local governmental involvement, which, given the absence of significant new funding, persisted in being uneven and less than robust. The other nine recommendations of this taskforce pertained to issues of the constitutional and legal footing of FBNPs and strongly reflected the day-to-day operational experiences of organizations that have participated in the faith-based initiatives. Covered topics include the need to clarify prohibited uses of federal funds and to differentiate between direct and indirect aid; assuring religious rights of clients; and reducing barriers to obtaining 501(c)(3) status. The taskforce pointedly noted that at the Administration’s behest, they did not address the issue of religious-based employment that is partially or fully subsidized by federal funds, suggesting that this issue will be left to the courts to decide (White House 2010d, 119).

The Promise of the Obama Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

Although the Obama FBNP derived from the same executive order anchors, it promises to be a very different policy initiative than the Bush FBCI. The FBNP promises to be less focused on small FBCOs. Indeed, the roles of small FBCOs appear destined to be substantially diminished under the FBNP in comparison to the FBCI, though they will continue to derive benefits from the procurement policies established under the FBCI. Although the core policy areas initially articulated as the foci of the FBNP include some issues with considerable moral quotients such as fatherhood and healthy families, there is no evidence of consideration of a “faith-factor”-- the expectation that faith-based organizations will necessarily bring transformative practices to social services provision. Indeed, the FBNP seems poised to disavow the notion that randomly solicited congregations and community organizations are, a priori, strong candidates for the role of service providers. Overall, notions of major social policy purposes are not strongly projected in the wording of the FBNP, or in the narratives surrounding it.

Like the FBCI, the FBNP involves stakeholders in defining the focus and content of this policy initiative. Under President Obama, the stakeholder role emerged stronger in the aftermath of the issuance of the founding executive orders rather than prior to, and the stakeholder group is substantially more diverse. As reflected in the make-up of the inaugural Advisory Council and in

the group of participants who developed the Report of Recommendations, conventional religious organizations share presence alongside major NGOs, both religious-based and secular, in shaping the Obama FBNP. Indeed, it appears that under the FBNP, the role of faith-based organizations will be significantly defined in partnership with a more diverse group of larger secular organizations. A more diverse group of stakeholders has defined a more catholic initiative. The result is that the FBNP promises to look less like a narrow, special interest policy initiative than did the FBCI. Finally, it appears that the FBNP will be used as a tool for advancing a broad range of Obama Administration interests which are at the intersection of faith—broadly defined, international affairs and peace making, and domestic public affairs.

Conclusions

In the long run, both the Bush FBCI and the Obama FBNP will likely be seen as groundbreaking policy developments. The Bush FBCI for its relatively extraordinary procurement advances benefiting faith-based organizations as a new class of entrants, and the Obama FBNP for moving faith-based initiatives beyond the predictable domain of social services provision to new and innovative roles in international affairs. In regard to both initiatives, the core of the analysis presented here illumines largely unencumbered presidential choice taking in policy development and public management with the use of executive orders. Generally, President Bush chose to use the FBCI to incorporate the faith community in a key role in applying the resources of government to social problems affecting the poor and needy. Given success in reforming agency procurement rules, a likely permanent environment has been created for new and expanded partnerships between government and the faith community.

President Obama seemed poised to make a very different set of choices with the FBNP in his efforts to engage the faith community in partnerships with government. He seems likely to deploy the resources of a more diverse faith community in the management and support of aspects of his larger policy agenda, to encompass issues well beyond those related to social policy. While the Obama FBNP benefits from a reformed procurement environment, the earlier emphasis on incorporating small, new entrant FBCOs in federal contracting and grant making may substantially decline in importance. Similarly, the earlier emphasis on extensive organizational readiness efforts under the FBCI will likely be eliminated. Just as President Bush had established a new form of federal partnerships with faith-based and community organizations, President Obama seems poised to significantly redefine the nature of those federal partnerships. However, in its early iteration, the FBNP was no more of an institutionalized policy mandate than the Bush FBCI. Therein lies an interesting dilemma in regard to some uses of executive orders as the foundation for major policy initiatives. While executive orders are powerful tools for public management in the moment as it were, executive orders may be undermined by the ultimate fluidity of their potency. What one president can do by the fiat of executive orders, another president can at least substantially alter by similar fiat. This is

especially the case when executive orders are not fully optimized in securing a president's policy preferences. However, given the precedent setting nature of the FBCI and expected precedents from the FBNP, and their potency as tools of policy development and public management, it is easy to imagine that executive driven faith-based initiatives will become a permanent part of the tapestry of American public policy.

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Table 1
Funding to Faith-Based Organizations
FY03-FY05

	FY03			FY04			FY05		
	Available Funding	Amount to FBOs	Percentage to FBOs	Available Funding	Amount to FBOs	Percentage to FBOs	Available Funding	Amount to FBOs	Percentage to FBOs
HHS	\$10,874,318,385	\$567,875,824	5.2%	\$10,183,609,134	\$680,821,864	6.7%	\$10,512,377,721	\$780,491,043	7.4%
HUD	\$2,197,738,326	\$532,073,257	24.2%	\$2,338,904,225	\$544,834,982	23.3%	\$2,170,576,000	\$520,961,223	24.0%
DOJ	\$791,700,000	\$51,592,369	6.5%	\$756,239,680	\$59,275,674	7.8%	\$638,471,000	\$70,029,600	11.0%
DOL	\$512,362,317	\$11,342,124	2.2%	\$180,460,540	\$34,362,075	19.0%	\$189,393,063	\$20,346,578	10.7%
ED	\$134,699,000	\$6,817,999	5.1%	\$214,394,689	\$14,629,888	6.8%	\$203,830,208	\$17,682,773	8.7%
Sub Total	\$14,510,818,028	\$1,169,701,573	8.1%	\$13,673,608,268	\$1,333,924,483	9.8%	\$13,714,647,992	\$1,409,511,217	10.3%
USAID				\$3,686,179,114	\$521,872,579	14.2%	\$4,152,560,232	\$591,047,452	14.2%
USDA				\$2,096,926,386	\$148,694,487	7.1%	\$1,848,453,584	\$153,687,577	8.3%
GRAND TOTAL				\$19,456,713,768	\$2,004,491,549	10.3%	\$19,715,661,808	\$2,154,246,246	10.9%

Notes:

FY03 data based on a review of 140 competitive programs at HHS (75), HUD (12), DOJ (22), DOL (28), and ED (3).
 FY04 data based on a review of 151 competitive programs at HHS (73), HUD (11), DOJ (17), DOL (24), ED (7), USDA (19), and 17 program areas at USAID.
 FY05 data based on a review of 130 competitive programs at HHS (67), HUD (11), DOJ (14), DOL (12), ED (6), USDA (20), and 28 program areas at USAID.
 USAID and USDA did not report data in FY03.

Source: White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

Table 2
**Federal Competitive Funding Won by Faith-Based and Secular Non-Profits
 FY06**

AGENCY	TOTAL AWARDED	SECULAR	(%)	FAITH-BASED	(%)
HHS	\$9,774,274,710	\$6,786,010,680	69.4%	\$723,171,246	7.4%
USAID	\$3,884,458,053	\$2,962,398,068	76.3%	\$552,363,250	14.2%
HUD	\$2,054,962,792	\$1,232,496,540	60.0%	\$512,014,071	24.9%
USDA	\$1,811,016,754	\$602,890,595	33.3%	\$193,038,168	10.7%
DOJ	\$645,485,827	\$297,284,488	46.1%	\$73,091,780	11.3%
DOL	\$157,088,195	\$117,430,278	74.8%	\$15,536,283	9.9%
ED	\$191,663,976	\$68,502,686	35.7%	\$15,221,243	7.9%
CNS	\$573,020,592	\$382,114,158	66.7	\$69,892,379	12.2%
DOC	\$285,534,489	\$58,301,191	20.4%	\$8,552,860	3.0%
VA	\$69,158,052	\$43,204,424	62.5%	\$20,790,952	30.1%
SBA	\$12,246,842	\$10,250,756	83.7%	\$989,192	8.1%
TOTAL	\$19,458,910,282	\$12,560,883,864	64.6%	\$2,184,661,424	11.2%

Notes:

1. FY06 data from a review of 134 competitive programs at HHS (65), HUD (11), DOJ (14), DOL (11), ED (5), USDA (20), DOC (6), VA (1), SBA (1) AND 35 competitive program areas at USAID (26) and CNS (9). Percentages based on amounts awarded.
2. CNS used its own internal data collection method that differs in some ways from the standard process, notably that it included some programs from which grants to FBCOs came via state sub-grants rather than directly from the Federal government.
3. In a review of awarded totals from the (7) agencies for which data are available in FY05, the amount to faith-based rose from 11.2% to 11.3% while the amount to secular nonprofits fell from 66.2% to 65.1%.

Source: White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiative