

2-1-2001

Proposal to Allow Faith-Based Groups Vie for Federal Funding: UD Experts Concerned About Church, State Gray Areas

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Recommended Citation

"Proposal to Allow Faith-Based Groups Vie for Federal Funding: UD Experts Concerned About Church, State Gray Areas" (2001).
News Releases. 9428.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/9428

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73A (2) e.1



Feb. 1, 2001
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NEWS TIPS

**PROPOSAL TO ALLOW FAITH-BASED GROUPS VIE FOR FEDERAL FUNDING:
UD EXPERTS CONCERNED ABOUT CHURCH, STATE GRAY AREAS**

A COMPLICATED PROPOSAL — George Bush’s proposal to allow faith-based institutions to compete for all federal grants is a complicated one, filled with “potential pitfalls,” says the Rev. James L. Heft, S.M., professor of faith and culture and chancellor at the University of Dayton.

“If faith-based agencies become engrossed in the business of running social agencies, they run the risk of losing their religious vision,” Heft says. “No one is so naive as to think they’ll replace government agencies. A problem results when they forget why they exist in the first place.”

A possible benefit of the proposal, Heft adds, could be greater efficiency at running social programs. “We all know that big government is inefficient. I think these faith-based groups would be more efficient and offer a higher quality of service. But they cannot forget their mission.”

For media interviews, contact **Father James L. Heft, S.M.**, at UD at (937) 229-2105 or via e-mail at James.Heft@notes.udayton.edu.

OVERLAP OF OBJECTIVES A PARADOX — Bush’s proposal is a good idea for the country, says Allen Sultan, professor of law at UD. “There is a desperate need to create some sort of moral direction within the White House and the country.”

But, Sultan warns, “people will have to keep an eye on the gray area between the state and church. I think the taxpayers will accept faith-based agencies that offer job training. I don’t think they’ll accept them selling Bibles or Korans. After all, these groups are in the business of prayer.”

Sultan says a paradox exists in this proposal in that, “while government and faith-based institutions overlap in their welfare for society, they are constitutionally separated. The church doesn’t want to be told by the state what to do and vice versa.

“Thomas Jefferson called this the wall of separation,” adds Sultan, who teaches constitutional law. “I don’t know how you keep that separation and still work together for the good of the population.”

For media interviews, contact **Allen Sultan** at (937) 229-3542 or via e-mail at sultan@udayton.edu.

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