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NEWS TIPS

BUSH PLAN TO ALLOW FAITH-BASED GROUPS VIE FOR FEDERAL FUNDING: UD EXPERTS DIFFER OVER PROPOSAL'S RAMIFICATIONS

BUSH WILL HAVE TROUBLE IN CONGRESS — President George Bush encouraged the nation's mayors this week to support his faith-based initiative, a proposal now before Congress that would allow religious social agencies to compete for federal funds. But the likelihood of his plan becoming law is "slim to none," says Gerald Kerns, a University of Dayton political science professor. "I just don't see it happening."

Bush's plan is "in deep trouble in Congress because a coalition of progressive Democrats and conservative Republicans will work against it," says Kerns, who has been analyzing the American political scene for 40 years. "Progressive Democrats see it as unconstitutional, that it represents an excessive entanglement between government and religion. And conservative Republicans will vote against the initiative because they don't think it's a strong enough commitment to U.S. religion. They believe that Bush has compromised too many principles of religious teachings already."

For media interviews, contact **Gerald Kerns** at UD at (937) 229-3650, at home at (513) 583-9672 or via e-mail at gerald.kerns@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 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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A COMPLICATED PROPOSAL — Bush's faith-based initiative is "complicated and 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.

A VIOLATION OF THE CONSTITUTION — The whole idea is a gross violation of the Constitution — against the original intent of separation of church and state, says Roberta Alexander, a professor of history at UD who teaches U.S. legal and constitutional history.

"The writings of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison show that they believed that the church didn't need any help from the government and, that if it did, then the church — and the country — was in trouble. Apparently, Mr. Bush thinks that religion in this country is in trouble."

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