



Ethical Action Report



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Church and State: Stop Religious Discrimination in Obama's Faith-Based Program!

Write to the director of the Office of the Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, Joshua Dubois, and demand that the Office prevent religious discrimination in hiring and firing for publicly-funded jobs.

BACKGROUND

Under eight years of the Bush administration, the Faith-Based Initiative consistently violated the separation of church and state by allowing organizations that receive federal funds to proselytize and practice religious discrimination on the tax-payers' dollar. On the campaign trail, then-Senator Obama pledged to revise the program by restoring important constitutional safeguards against such practices.

However, since taking office, Obama has failed to live up to his promise. His recent executive order that created the new Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships keeps in place all of Bush's rules and regulations that allow discrimination to occur. Those willing to lend a hand can still be sent away for being the wrong religion. Joshua Dubois, the newly appointed director of the Office, has expressed a more nuanced opinion of whether the program will change at all. Write to him and let him know that government money shouldn't be used for religious discrimination!

Reproductive Freedom: Support a Rescission of Anti-Woman HHS Regulations

Submit your comments to the Federal Register in support of a rescission of the Health and Human Services "conscience" rule. You can submit your comments at <http://www.regulations.gov/search/index.jsp>.

BACKGROUND

President Obama has taken the first step in rescinding a dangerous Health and Human Services (HHS) rule that allows healthcare workers to refuse to provide virtually any family planning service that conflicts with their religious beliefs. This rule, pushed through by the Bush administration last year as one of its final policy initiatives, puts women's health in jeopardy by denying their right to vital health services and information. Moreover, it ignores important civil rights law that balances an employee's religious beliefs with an employer's ability to provide their patients with access to health care.

We need your help to make sure the HHS rule is rescinded. Please show your support for Obama by submitting your comments to the Federal Register.

Civil Rights: Support the DC House Voting Rights Act (H.R. 157)

Write to your representative in the U.S. House and ask him or her to support the District of Columbia's right to vote--without strings attached!

BACKGROUND

The citizens of the District of Columbia finally have a chance to have a say in their government. The U.S. Senate just passed a bill that would grant the District a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives, but attached an amendment that would strip most local gun-control laws from the city—including laws against carrying unregistered firearms and allowing gun possession by persons who have committed violent crimes, and laws mandating vision requirements for gun use.

It is hypocritical to recognize DC's fundamental right to have a say in the Federal government while simultaneously revoking the city's control over a local issue. The House of Representatives will vote on a version of the bill next week that does not contain the gun amendment. If it passes, it will force negotiations between the House and Senate on whether to keep the dangerous gun amendment in the final bill that will go to President Obama to be signed. Write to your representative and urge him or her to vote for DC voting rights, but not to support the gun amendment. The citizens of DC shouldn't have to give up their right to make local policy to get voting representation in Congress!

Human Rights: Support a Moratorium on Federal Executions

Call your members of Congress and demand that they support a moratorium on federal executions.

BACKGROUND

Capital punishment is still used in the United States despite wide-ranging ethical and legal concerns about its use. Racial disparities are severe and ubiquitous: 74 percent of people who are tried for capital offenses in the federal system are black and 81 percent of federal prisoners currently facing death sentences are racial minorities.

There are also major concerns that some prisoners who have been sentenced to death are innocent. Between 1973 and 2005 123 people were released from death row when new evidence proved their innocence.

Finally, legal representation has a huge effect on who will receive the death penalty. According to the ACLU, “the quality of legal representation [in the USA] is a better predictor of whether or not someone will be sentenced to death than the facts of the crime.” Therefore, those who can’t afford high-quality legal representation will be more likely to face the death penalty.

Our government must not continue to allow the death penalty when such concerns and disparities are present. Congress must pass a moratorium on the death penalty now!

Contacting Elected Officials

<p style="text-align: center;">Congress</p> <p><i>Mailing Address</i> United States Senate <i>or</i> U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515</p> <p><i>Phone Number</i> Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121</p> <p><i>E-mail</i> Visit www.senate.gov or www.house.gov to use your representatives' e-mail contact forms.</p>	
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