

National

Religious

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Christian

Communicators

Impacting

the World



July 18, 2011

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am President and C.E.O. of the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB), a non-profit organization whose mission is to keep the doors of electronic, digital, and broadcast communication open for the transmission of the Christian Gospel. In that regard we also support and defend, in allied ways, the work of a wide variety of Christian ministry organizations, including a number of non-profit relief and charity groups which are members of our organization.

I am writing to draw your attention to a subject on which you have spoken previously, and eloquently: the beneficial partnership that the federal government can have with faith-based organizations as they jointly work toward solving the myriad problems that face our nation.

Recently a coalition of groups have called on you to repudiate a prior Executive Order (EO #13279) from a prior Administration that struck a sensible, and lawful balance between the religious freedom rights of religious organizations receiving federal grants and the great benefit that such groups can bring us toward solving the great social needs of our day.

I urge you not to repudiate that EO; instead I would ask that you reaffirm it entirely. That EO provided in part that:

Consistent with the Free Exercise Clause and the Free Speech Clause of the Constitution, faith-based organizations should be eligible to compete for Federal financial assistance used to support social service programs and to participate fully in the social service programs supported with Federal financial assistance

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without impairing their independence, autonomy, expression, or religious character. Accordingly, a faith-based organization that applies for or participates in a social service program supported with Federal financial assistance may retain its independence and may continue to carry out its mission, including the definition, development, practice, and expression of its religious beliefs, provided that it does not use direct Federal financial assistance to support any inherently religious activities, such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization.

The legality and prudence of this Executive Order, as well as its compliance with existing religious liberty law, was borne out by a Memorandum Opinion that was issued on June 29, 2007 by the Office of Legal Counsel for the Department of Justice that affirmed the religious freedom rights of religious organizations that receive federal grants. NRB's General Counsel, attorney Craig Parshall, has written to Attorney General Holder, asking that he not comply with the demands of some groups that have been calling for a review, and rescission of the Memorandum Opinion of 2007. Our General Counsel has expressed his considered opinion that the Memorandum Opinion expressed a sound view of the law then, and remains a sound legal document now. His letter is enclosed with this correspondence.

Mr. President, I would urge you to reaffirm the provisions of Executive Order 13279. In so doing you will be ratifying the essential role that religious organizations have to play in America. Just as importantly, you will be taking an important step in preventing a campaign of hostility to be mounted against faith-based charities and service organizations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Frank Wright", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Frank Wright, Ph.D.
President & CEO