



The Roundtable

on Religion and Social Welfare Policy

Is “Charitable Choice” Compatible With the First Amendment?

Is it a Good Idea? Does it Work?

By Richard P. Nathan and David J. Wright
Rockefeller Institute of Government

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Seven years ago, in the summer of 1996, an intriguing question in Washington was, “Will he, Won’t he?” referring to whether President Bill Clinton would sign the welfare reform law passed by the 104th Congress, in which both bodies were controlled by Republicans. Clinton did sign this bill, and surprisingly to many observers it played out in a way that at least in its early years was well received by both liberals and conservatives.¹

SECTION 104, “CHARITABLE CHOICE”

Unnoticed in the debate about issues raised by the 1996 Welfare reform legislation was a provision that has since taken on a life of its own. Section 104, the so-called “Charitable Choice” provision, has as its purpose to,

...allow States to contract with religious organizations, or to allow religious organizations to accept certificates, vouchers, or other forms of disbursement under any program described in subsection (a)(2), on the same basis as any other nongovernmental provider without impairing the religious character of such organization, and without diminishing the religious freedom of beneficiaries of assistance funded under such a program.

Unnoticed in the debate about the 1996 Welfare reform legislation was a provision that has since taken on a life of its own: Charitable Choice.

The aim of Section 104 is to assure that religious organizations have a “level playing field,” that they are able to receive federal grant-in-aid funds and other forms of financial support, such as vouchers, on the same basis as other nonprofit organizations that are providers of social services. Sponsored by Senator John Ashcroft (R. Mo.), now U.S. Attorney General, this provision came to life big time one presidential-election cycle later than 1996 — in 2000. Both major party candidates embraced the idea of charitable choice to combat problems of welfare and poverty.

¹ See Richard P. Nathan and Thomas L. Gais *Implementing the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996: A First Look* (Albany, Rockefeller Institute Press, 1999). This report is also available at http://www.rockinst.org/publications/federalism/first_look/index.html.

Vice President Al Gore said he had encouraged President Bill Clinton to sign the 1996 national welfare reform act, and added that he was in favor of extending its charitable choice provision to deal with other social needs, specifically, drug treatment, homelessness, and youth violence. Gore qualified his endorsement stressing, as the law requires, the need to have secular alternatives and ensuring that no one is forced to participate in religious observances.

I have seen the transformative power of faith-based approaches through the national coalition I have led to help people move from welfare to work....for too long, faith-based organizations have wrought miracles on a shoestring. With the steps I'm proposing today, they will no longer need to depend on faith alone.²

On the Republican side, George W. Bush had been an innovator on charitable choice as governor of Texas. Shortly after the enactment of the 1996 national welfare reform act, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Governor Bush created a Texas faith-based task force, its purpose being to identify obstacles to government funding of religious groups. Findings of the task force were enacted into law in Texas in 1997. As a presidential candidate, Bush said he would create an Office of Faith-Based Action to promote charitable choice, which he did. This was among his first executive actions after assuming office.

The focus of both major party presidential candidates on the charitable choice idea placed it on the public agenda and created wide interest on a basis that had not occurred at the passage of the 1996 welfare reform law, and which continues to this day. Although the name “charitable choice” doesn’t quite capture the purpose of this effort to expand the participation of religious organizations in social service, the label has stuck and is widely used.

To appreciate where faith-based social service stands today in America, it is important first to understand what defines a faith-based organization and to explore the theories upon which their services are built.

To appreciate where faith-based social service stands today in America, it is important first to understand what defines a faith-based organization — known as “FBOs” — and to explore the theories upon which their services are built. FBOs typically have either a current or past affiliation with a religious denomination; the tenets of that faith animate the work of the organization. The managers and staff of these organizations often, but not always, share the same faith and are motivated and trained to provide service in accord with their beliefs. It is likely, though not necessarily the case, that FBO services are provided in physical structures used at other times for religious purposes, and which may be imbued by and contain the sounds and symbols of that faith.

² Excerpted from speech on Faith-Based Organizations, Atlanta, GA, May 24, 1999.

For some FBOs, faith is manifest in the act of service itself, conspicuous in the compassion inherent in the way work is performed. For others, there are programmatic elements, which may include prayer, the teaching of religious values, studying religious texts, and worship. These elements may be implied, rather than explicit — integrated within an FBO’s services or segregated — and may either be mandatory or voluntary as part of a given service.

In theory, FBO services are effective because they are holistic, offer support networks, and have caring staff.

There is a macro theory of the value of faith-based social service that holds that, compared to secular non-profit or government service providers, faith-based organizations:

- Are more “holistic” in their approach, treating the “whole” person by stressing spiritual renewal and personal transformation;
- Are better at placing program recipients in an ongoing support network which provides role models and connects clients with the community;
- Have “front-line” workers who are more caring and more personal in their approach; and,
- Translate these features into effective service.

Section 104 (as quoted above) refers to religious freedom not being “diminished” in the way that it is implemented. It is ironic, however, that the way the provision has played out has actually roiled the legal waters. In fact, one can argue that Section 104 has had, to a degree, the opposite effect of what its framers intended. Debates about charitable choice, spurred by civil liberties activists, have resulted in an outcropping of court cases about the appropriateness of using public money for social services sponsored and performed by religious organizations; in many cases, involving activities that had simply gone on as a customary and long-accepted way of delivering needed services in many parts of the country.

THE ROLE OF THE ROUNDTABLE ON RELIGION AND SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY

With support from The Pew Charitable Trusts, the *Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy* was established as a project of the Rockefeller Institute of Government in January 2002, charged to develop an independent, non-partisan research program to fill gaps in knowledge about faith-based social service, and to use those findings to engage in and promote an informed debate.

The *Roundtable*’s activities research focuses on the following questions:

- What are the differences, if any, between the way faith-based organizations deliver services and the way a government agency delivers services?
- What are the constitutional, legal and regulatory issues affecting government support of faith-based providers?
- How, if at all, does government funding influence the provision of services by religious-affiliated organizations?
- How, if at all, does a provider's level of religious integration influence its delivery of social services?
- How do clients' perceptions and a program's effects on their lives vary?
- What explains the similarities and differences in service delivery, client perceptions, and effects between FBOs and secular providers?
- How do service organizations define and measure program effectiveness?
- How does performance by faith-based providers compare with secular providers?

The idea of religious organizations providing social services with public funds is by no means new, and long a part of the *nonprofitization* of social services.

In consultation with scholars and researchers, the *Roundtable* identified, and then embarked on filling, priority areas for study. Among key priorities are comparative studies, with faith-based organizations compared to secular programs that offer similar services to the same clientele, and research that explores the structure and operation of FBOs, including how they integrate the “faith factor” in their services and its effect on clients. The *Roundtable's* assessment of the scope and scale of FBO activity involves the review of the existing and future capacity to provide services — an effort that draws on a network of research associates in all fifty states. The *Roundtable* is also studying the role played by non-government sources of support to FBOs, private foundations and corporations.

It must be emphasized that the idea of religious organizations providing social services with public funds is by no means new. Catholic Charities, Jewish Family Services, Lutheran Social Services, The Salvation Army, the National Council of Churches of Christ, and other large national religious organizations have been active for years providing services that are extensively publicly aided. This is part of a movement we have called the “*nonprofitization*” of social services.³ Many

³ See Richard P. Nathan with the assistance of Elizabeth I. Davis, Mark J. McGrath, and William C. O'Heany *The “Nonprofitization Movement” as a Form of Devolution* (Albany, Rockefeller Institute, 1996). Also available on the Rockefeller Institute website.

examples can be found in the case of religious organizations.⁴ These examples are from a recent *Roundtable* report,

*The governing board of the Emergency Food and Shelter Program of the Federal Emergency Management Agency consists of representatives of the Salvation Army, United Jewish Communities, Catholic Charities U.S.A., and the National Council of the Churches of Christ. This board has a 20 year history of funding using these faith based organizations as fiscal agents.*⁵

*The Family Pathfinders program in Texas and Faith and Families in Mississippi predate implementation of Charitable Choice.....Virginia's experience with providing contracts to Faith Based Organizations for mentoring and other welfare related services also predates the federal legislation.*⁶

NOW A MAJOR ISSUE

The George W. Bush administration's effort to promote the idea and aims of charitable choice through legislation, and now more actively through administrative actions, have been opposed on substantive grounds, as well as attacked as a political strategy. In addition to concern about constitutional issues and the absence of evidence on effectiveness, opponents of charitable choice as a major administration national policy initiative have questioned its motivation. The argument often heard is that the Faith Based Initiative is heavily or mainly motivated by the administration's aim to solidify its support among conservative Christian organizations and small minority (black and less so Hispanic) churches, especially in the latter case in key states like Pennsylvania and Florida.

There has been a lot of attention to this subject in Washington, but it has been much slower to play out at state and local levels.

One cannot resolve questions about political purpose. But the work we are doing to track this policy initiative and its effects can shed light on the subject by looking at the scope and character of the activities of the new players that are

⁴ See for example *2003 Annual Research Conference: The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in the Social Welfare System –Breakout Session: Assessing the Effectiveness of Faith-Based Organizations*. Also available at http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/transcripts/3-6-2003_spring_breakout_assessing_effectiveness.pdf.

⁵ See Lisa M. Montiel *The Use of Public Funds for Delivery of Human Services* (Albany, Rockefeller Institute, June 2003) p. 6.

⁶ *Ibid* 19.

aided, the policy and legal issues raised by the presidential initiative, and the effects it has had to the extent they can be assessed.⁷ Suffice to say already,

- That there has been a lot of attention to this subject in Washington.
- But it has been much slower to play out at state and local levels where most of the money is (federal aid money and state and local funds) that can be used to provide aid to nonprofit groups, including faith-based organizations.
- And notably that the unprecedented current stringency of state and local budgets raises a large question as to whether at a time when the Bush administration is urging more involvement in publicly-aided social services on the part by faith based organization, there are in fact fewer opportunities for them to obtain public funds.

EFFECT ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The law with respect to direct and indirect public funding of social services delivered by religious groups has changed dramatically over the past twenty years.

We turn now to the next part of our title — the First Amendment. It covers a huge territory of individual rights. Religion is dealt with first. “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Guarantees of freedom of speech, the press, the right of people to peaceably assemble and “to petition the Government for a redress of grievances” follow.

Although the phrase “separation of church and state” is often used to describe the U.S. political system, the Constitution does not say this. Thomas Jefferson as president used this phrase, speaking of a “wall of separation between church and state” in a letter he wrote in March of 1802. European history and theories of the Enlightenment in the 18th century are noted for this concept, which carried over to North America. Interestingly, Jefferson’s colleague, friend and successor, and an American hero, James Madison, was, according to respected experts, more flexible in his stance on church and state, indeed at times saying things that seemingly would have countenanced the aims of President George W. Bush’s Faith-Based Initiative.⁸

The Rockefeller Institute’s *Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy*, also has as a major component the conduct of legal analyses by professors Ira

⁷ See descriptions of the work of the Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy, sponsored by the Religion Program of The Pew Charitable Trusts, Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government 411 State Street Albany, NY 12203: The website this project is <http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org>.

⁸ We are indebted to A. James Reichley for these comments about Jefferson and Madison. See his book *Faith in Politics* (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2002), Chapter 3, “Intentions of the Founders;” especially pp. 92-93.

“Chip” Lupu and Robert Tuttle of George Washington University Law School. Their work has been immensely valuable and is the subject of many reports on the *Roundtable* website. As recently as twenty years ago, informed experts would have said the state of the law was clear. Direct financing by government of social services delivered by faith-intensive organizations is unconstitutional, even if the services have a secular character. The same commentators no doubt would have said that indirect financing (by way of vouchers, tax credits) is questionable on constitutional grounds.

Now, the state of the law is dramatically different. Although the law still forbids direct government support of religious activities, such as worship or religious counseling, it no longer forbids the provision of direct aid to religious organizations for their secular social services. In addition, and as long as certain key conditions are met (having to do with clients having an independent choice of providers engaged in services that have a clear secular character) current law permits indirect (e.g. voucher) financing of any of those providers’ activities. According to professors Lupu and Tuttle, we have moved over the past twenty years — not completely, but unmistakably — away from a policy of separation and toward a legal policy of *neutrality*, in which religious auspices are treated identically with those of its secular counterparts. These changed conditions are illustrated by two issues that have been center-stage in debate over the administration’s Faith Based Initiative, the basic aim of charitable choice and the matter of hiring rights.

Section 104 and subsequent parallel provisions in other federal laws⁹ are clear in saying that contracts for services must be made equally available to faith-based organizations, provided that their services are for a secular purpose, do not involve religious worship or proselytizing, and furthermore provided that an alternative service is available that is similar and secular.

This is easier said than done. Whether FBOs can provide social services without engaging directly or indirectly in religious activity funded by tax dollars is the key question, and is one of the most important questions we are pursuing.

A second issue, a hot issue in Washington, involves employment, — i.e., whether FBOs can exercise hiring preferences for coreligionists if they receive public funds. Taking the second issue first because it is somewhat more easily dealt with, the 1964 Civil Rights Act contains an exemption from the prohibition on religious discrimination for religious organizations: They are free to favor

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⁹ See, for example, the Welfare-to-Work program, the Community Services Block Grant, the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant, and certain discretionary programs for homelessness and substance abuse and mental health services

The exemption permitting religious groups to favor coreligionists in hiring is complicated further by American federalism: most social service contracts involve commingling federal, state, and local funds and many states and localities do not extend an exemption to private hiring done with state or city funds.

coreligionists in hiring. The catch is that this authority is viewed by groups that oppose Section 104 as not applying to positions for which a religious organization *receives public funds*. The issue is complicated further by the nature of American federalism, the fact that most social service contracts involve programs that are state or locally contracted and are administered locally. Such services often involve commingling federal, state, and local funds. Although FBOs may be exempt from federal prohibitions on considering religious belief in employment practices, states and localities vary in their laws on the subject. A number of them do not extend an exemption to private hiring done with state or city funds.

This area highlights the question of separation vs. neutrality. If the playing field for FBO service providers is to be level and they are to be treated in a neutral way, why should they be afforded distinct hiring rights not available to their secular counterparts? Proponents of the hiring exemption,

on the other hand, defend it as essential to neutrality of treatment, because the exemption permits FBOs to do what secular organizations may already do – that is, limit their hiring to people who are ideologically in sympathy with the organization’s basic aims. Moreover, this is a fighting issue in the Congress. It held up the administration’s legislative agenda for charitable choice and has stifled its efforts to expand the initiative to functional areas in which the Administration has sought legislation to extend the charitable choice concept.

The first and more fundamental issue above, whether and where lines can be drawn to separate religious activity from that which can be supported by public funds, is complicated, subtle and hard to get at. Legally, these questions turn on the tension inherent in the two religion clauses of the First Amendment, the free exercise and establishment clauses. Advocates of the Faith Based initiative argue that the free exercise rights of individuals and of religious organizations must be protected, and furthermore that they should not be sacrificed on the altar of separation. Separationists, on the other hand, argue that government should not be financing religious indoctrination or experience as an element of social service. Separationists also argue that since money is fungible, any public funding of religious groups creates problems of supplantation. Public funding according to this view often is intermingled with, or frees up, other funds going into religious activities, thereby providing support for them. Moreover, the extent and depth of oversight seen as needed to avoid this problem is said to make it exceedingly difficult to come up with a way to have contracts with overtly religious organizations without requiring so much government scrutiny and oversight that a

second constitutional problem is created, that of “excessive entanglement” between government and religion.¹⁰

A number of the most important new charitable choice test cases involve drug and alcohol abuse treatment, a field in which even seemingly secular approaches have a spiritual character involving specific steps (among “The 12 Steps”) focused on “belief in a higher power.” The idea here is one of substituting spiritual faith for substance addiction. While direct financial support to FBOs is now permitted, that support must be limited to secular activities. The rub is that neither the case law nor the text of most state social service contracts or their attendant guidelines are sufficiently clear on the lines between what is permissible and impermissible. With very few notable exceptions, existing contracts between states and FBOs are silent on the subject of the specific rights and responsibilities that attach to FBOs under such contracts. There is a great need for governments to define the scope of religious activity that they may and may not subsidize.¹¹

There is a great need for governments to define the scope of religious activity that they may and may not subsidize.

HOW SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT THIS?

As we moved forward, one of us – Dick Nathan – noted that although he finds our subject matter fascinating and interesting, he also finds it *elusive*.

On Mondays and Wednesdays, I am upbeat about the idea. On Tuesdays and Thursdays I worry about it. (Don't ask me about Fridays.)

Thinking in “Monday and Wednesday” terms, we note that churches, especially at the community and neighborhood levels, can be effective agents to help people work out family and individual problems that involve values and feelings of self-worth. The United States is a religious country; church activism and religious pluralism are notably strong.¹² This is a strong base; and there ought to be a good role for the faith sector in community social service.

¹⁰ See Ira C. Lupu and Robert Tuttle *Government Partnerships with Faith-Based Service Providers - State of the Law* (Albany, Rockefeller Institute, 2002).

¹¹ See Ira C. Lupu and Robert Tuttle, *Developments in the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives: Comments on Notices of Proposed Rulemaking and Guidance Document*, available on the Internet at: http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/docs/legal/reports/1-9-2003_exec_order_analysis.pdf, and Final Notices of Proposed Rulemaking Concerning the Faith-Based Initiative: A Legal Analysis (Albany, Rockefeller Institute, 2003), available on the Internet at: http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/legal/legal_update.cfm?id=18.

¹² See policy talk by Ram Cnaan, *The Role of Religious Congregations in Providing Social Service*, published by the Rockefeller Institute. Available at <http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org>, section on “Publication,” under “Meetings and Conference Transcripts.”

Thinking in “Tuesday and Thursday” terms, there is a worry about the fine lines that need to be drawn to separate religious from secular activity. There is a large set of questions in this territory involving both research and program administration. Understanding how the necessary fine lines are drawn involves close-in qualitative research at the ground level that is extraordinarily hard to do in an even-handed way and with a large enough sample to answer critical questions. We need to know what happens when FBO workers and volunteers go one-on-one with clients. Many such workers are so imbued with faith (and good for them) such that the lines of Constitutional good practice are not comprehended or respected even if program leaders have adopted proper policies and have the best of intentions for carrying them out. It is imperative to get at this aspect of FBO social service, but it is not easy to do.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As its core purpose, the *Roundtable* serves to assist those involved to scrutinize and better-understand the character and effectiveness of faith-based social services, and to tone down and better inform policy debates on this subject. How can we get a handle on answers to questions about the character and efficacy of FBO social services in varied policy domains and for varied population groups?

As its core purpose, the Roundtable serves to assist those involved to scrutinize and better-understand the character and effectiveness of faith-based social services.

Our initial instinct was to seek opportunities for studies that would provide the highest levels of proof — classical experiments with random assignment, or barring that, studies which apply quasi-experimental techniques that come close to the “gold standard” of random-assignment social experimentation. Although social experiments provide the best evidence, they are very expensive, take a long time to conduct, and often fail to yield significant results because of confounding problems. In the case of FBOs, there is a further special problem of selection bias: Can researchers randomly assign some people to religious treatments (i.e. social programs) and others to secular treatments? There are policy research experts who believe this problem can be solved, but we are skeptical.

The solution we come to is a research approach that is an extension of earlier studies that employ field observations on the institutional character and operations of public and nonprofit organizations that carry out domestic public purposes.¹³ The field evaluation methodology we have adopted for charitable choice is aided by what now is a national movement, using performance indicators in public management to assess “results” — to concentrate on the outputs rather than inputs of public programs. Using both institutional and performance data on faith-based

¹³ For a discussion of this methodology and its applications, see Irene Lurie “Field Network Studies” in *Using Analysis to Understand Implementation* (Washington D.C., Urban Institute Press, 2003).

and alternative social services in different policy domains, we seek to do two things: (1) to understand the independent variables (treatments) in depth; and (2) to control for variation as much as we can, and as best we can, in the way in which dependent variables about program performance are assessed.

The *Roundtable* has developed some instrumentation for gauging the faith character of religious and religiously-affiliated social service providers, and through comparative case studies to build theory and refine the attributes of the programs for which we conduct research on their effectiveness. We have performed and supported comparative case studies using matched-pair designs to compare faith-based to secular nonprofit service providers of closely similar services and clientele. The subjects of these comparative case studies are: intermediate-term shelter services with case management for homeless families (Michigan); employment and training for welfare clients (Indiana); responsible parenting (Mississippi); and residential substance abuse treatment (Washington and Oregon). Soon, the *Roundtable* will undertake next-level quantitative analyses comparing the effectiveness of faith-based and secular service providers in two policy domains — workforce development and outpatient substance abuse treatment. We will estimate differences in performance between faith-based and secular organizations, controlling for differences in capacity, environmental conditions, and the populations served. Then, for an in-depth sample, we will test to discern the reasons why some providers are more effective (after controlling for the key factors) than others. This comparative effectiveness study will address basic questions:

We have performed and supported comparative case studies using matched-pair designs to compare faith-based to secular nonprofit service providers of closely similar services and clientele.

- Are faith-based organizations more or less effective than secular organizations, controlling for some basic differences in clients served, services provided, and organizational resources and capacity?
- Why are some faith-based organizations more effective than others? Are differences attributable to differences in faith integration? In social capital, i.e., the relationship between the organization and the community and its institutions? In the way in which the program operates—i.e., the program “theory”? In the skills and experience of the organization’s management? Or are differences more credibly attributed to contextual variables, such as the match between the organization’s religious orientation and the target population and community, or how well public agencies work with faith-based organizations in providing referrals and funds?

The Roundtable will undertake next-level quantitative analyses on whether and why faith-based organizations are more or less effective than secular organizations, controlling for differences in clients served, services provided, and organizational resources and capacity.

In carrying out this next-level research, we will analyze differences in performance across providers of selected services for faith-based and secular organizations in multiple sites. Using regression analyses, the first step will be to estimate the effects on performance of differences in organizational capacity, types of persons served and types of services provided, to produce performance scores that statistically control for such factors.

Step two will be to examine in greater depth samples of faith-based job services and substance abuse treatment services. Rather than a survey to collect data, extensive field and phone research will be conducted on this smaller set of faith-based organizations to test for and discern reasons why some providers are more effective (after

controlling for the factors analyzed as described above) than others. In particular, we will test for whether the remaining variation in effectiveness is plausibly related to the following:

- Faith-integration—does more faith-integration lead to greater effectiveness, controlling for capacity, caseload, etc? Since we are working with a smaller sample, we can measure faith-integration more precisely.
- Social capital — irrespective of the religious character of the treatment, some providers may have closer ties to community institutions, including employers as well as people who can assist particular clients.
- Different program “theories” — many programs might be similar in faith-integration but could differ in other ways, such as whether they rely on close fellowship among participants; mentor relationships between caseworkers and clients; entities that provide guidance or services on a wide variety of matters or those that deal only with more narrowly defined goals. Or they may differ in ways having less of connection to faith, such as whether they work closely with employers to train people for specific job openings.
- Client focus — perhaps faith-integration is more likely to work for well defined client groups — it may, for example, clarify and strengthen the sense of mission among staff and the organization’s supporters when they know that all or most clients are struggling with a particular class of problem (such as depression, prior incarceration).
- “Match” between provider and clientele — maybe no single characteristic of organization or client has a uniform impact on effectiveness, but some types of providers/programs are more effective in dealing with some clients or some circumstances; e.g., perhaps the religion or denomination has to be already well grounded in the community, or perhaps strongly

faith-integrated organizations perform better in religiously and ethnically homogeneous communities.

THE THREE QUESTIONS

The answer at this stage to the three questions posed in the title of this paper are tentative, describing evaluation studies and other activities in progress by us and by others. Besides research, also important for the program of the *Roundtable* is to follow up on what we have done in the legal area. Whether legal barriers will emerge in this period to the expansion of faith-based social services remains to be seen. The Supreme Court will hear a critical issue later this year in *Locke v. Davey*, on whether state constitutional provisions enforcing separation of church and state or the federal free exercise clause is dominant. In sum, the aim of the *Roundtable* is to assemble, distill and combine the results of existing studies and conduct its own studies. We seek to clarify and classify the character and intensity of faith-based service of varied types in different domains of policy in order to understand them in depth. There are too few facts about what works or what doesn't for FBOs and what faith has to do with success or the lack of success. Absent better information about the character and efficacy of faith-based social services, the country faces a Hobson's choice of either derailing a viable approach to assist the neediest or unknowingly supporting an ineffective one. We believe those on both sides of this new church-state debate will be served by having the debate informed by independent evaluation and research.

Absent better information about the character and efficacy of faith-based social services, the country faces a Hobson's choice of either derailing a viable approach to assist the neediest or unknowingly supporting an ineffective one.

The Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy is a special project of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, the public policy research arm of the State University of New York, in partnership with George Washington University School of Law and with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts. **Richard P. Nathan** is Director of the Rockefeller Institute and of the Roundtable. **David J. Wright** is Director of Urban and Metropolitan Studies at the Rockefeller Institute and is Project Director of the Roundtable. This paper is based on a co-authored talk Nathan presented September 22 at Princeton University.



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