

BIDEN'S FAITH-BASED PROGRAM IS A BUST

On May 14, Melissa Rogers, the executive director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, met with representatives from six secular organizations: the Freedom From Religion Foundation, the American Humanist Association, American Atheists, Center for Inquiry, Ex-Muslims of North America and the Secular Coalition for America.

None of them are religion-friendly and some are positively militant in their agenda. They expressed their displeasure with the pro-religious liberty policies of the Trump administration, accusing it of fomenting "Christian nationalism." The creation of this fiction is central to the anti-religion politics that drives these groups.

It would be one thing if White House staffers in domestic policy or civil rights invited representatives of these six organizations to discuss their concerns; it is quite another when those who purport to work with people of faith do so. The problem is traceable to February 14, the day Biden issued his executive order establishing his faith-based program.

It was President George W. Bush who founded a White House office of faith-based initiatives. He realized how effective these programs were in the delivery of services to the needy. He also knew that government programs would be enhanced by partnering with these religious agencies. That is why he sought to put an end to government policies that shunned these entities.

On February 14, the White House announced that the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships "will not prefer one faith over another *or favor religious over secular organizations* (our italics)." But the whole point of creating

an office of faith-based programs was to prioritize religious social service agencies.

If the Biden administration is going to manipulate the founding purpose of faith-based initiatives by welcoming the advice of militant secularists, it would do us all a favor and simply trash this office.