

OBAMA'S FAITH-BASED PROGRAM TESTS THE FAITHFUL

The Obama administration said today that its newly designed Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships will decide on a case by case basis whether a funding request violates the Constitution. Joshua DuBois, who will head this initiative, said today that "People on both sides are going to be a little uncomfortable with that." At issue are the hiring rights of religious social service organizations that receive federal funding.

Responding is Catholic League president Bill Donohue:

"Those who walk in the middle of the street risk getting run over by cars on both sides. We know what President Obama wants—he said during the campaign that religious organizations that receive federal monies should not have the right to determine who works for them. But now he's preoccupied with issues of a more urgent matter. Thus, the balk.

"Sending requests on a case by case basis to lawyers to examine the constitutional questions is a ruse: We already know what the law says. The 1964 Civil Rights Act, in Section 702 (a), specifically allows an exemption for religious organizations in hiring. The legislators who passed this historic act knew that for the government to deny religious organizations that receive public monies the right to determine who should service its constituents would effectively neuter them. That position is as true today as it was then.

"It was also announced today that this office will expand its domain by working with the National Security Council 'to foster interfaith dialogue with leaders and scholars around the world.' Bunk. What in the world does servicing the poor

and promoting responsible fatherhood—two of the four priorities outlined by DuBois—have to do with having the National Security Council sit down with Ahmadinejad for a chat? This is just another way to gut faith-based initiatives.

“We need a test case that will force the Obama administration to walk on one side of the street.”