

SALVATION ARMY ISSUE IS A RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ISSUE

In today's edition of the *Washington Post*, it is alleged that there is an agreement between the White House and the Salvation Army that would protect charities like the Salvation Army from intrusive state and local laws in return for support for President Bush's faith-based initiatives.

Commenting on this development is Catholic League president William Donohue:

"The central issue in the Salvation Army controversy is whether state and local governments are free to meddle in the internal affairs of religious organizations. Under federal law, religious organizations are given wide latitude in hiring and job promotions. It is generally understood that houses of worship and religious charities would be unfairly burdened in their mission if they had to yield their religious prerogatives to the secular interests of the state. All the White House seems to be proposing is a guarantee that state and local governments will be held to the same standard that currently shields religious organizations from federal interference.

"Not surprisingly, Americans United for Separation of Church and State and People for the American Way are already engaging in demagoguery by charging that there is a cabal under way between the White House and the Salvation Army. This is utter nonsense. Those who truly believe in separation of church and state should enthusiastically support any increase in insularity afforded religious organizations. The alternative is to have the state encroach on the internal affairs of churches, synagogues, temples and mosques.

"In short, there can be no religious liberty without respect

for the autonomy that religious organizations duly exercise. That is why the Catholic League supports laws that keep the government in its place.”