

TIME TO CLOSE FAITH-BASED PROGRAMS

Recently we called on President Obama to shut down the Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

The goal of the faith-based initiative launched by President George W. Bush was to put an end to the long-standing discriminatory practice of allowing federal monies to be spent on secular social service agencies, but not religious-based programs. While the outcome of this effort was less than noble, its purpose certainly was. Under President Barack Obama, it is now clear that this program has a new agenda, and it is not one that is religion friendly.

It was just in January that *Washington Post* journalist William Wan reported that a group within the faith-based office was considering whether to ban the display of religious symbols in those religious institutions that receive federal funding.

It did not matter what the final decision was—we already knew enough. The mindset that is in place is sufficient reason to close down the entire faith-based office. And it's not just because of this development.

On July 1, 2008, while campaigning for the presidency, Obama said that if he were elected to office, he would not allow faith-based programs to hire just their own people. In other words, he declared his interest in gutting the faith element in faith-based programs: religious social service groups could not staff their offices with their own people when ministering to people of their own religion.

Last April, the Obama advance team told Georgetown University that the president would not speak there unless they put a drape over religious symbols. The school complied and placed a cover over a monogram of the name of Jesus.

Last month, it was reported that a serious debate ensued in the White House whether to display a manger scene at Christmastime. They eventually decided to erect the crèche. Now they're wondering whether to tell Catholic charitable offices to put up a sheet over crucifixes.

We know what they really want, and that is good enough to call for the dismantling of all faith-based programs in this administration.