

TIME TO CLOSE FAITH-BASED PROGRAMS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue explains why it is time for the Obama administration 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 religious friendly.

Just this week, it was reported by *Washington Post* journalist William Wan that a group within the faith-based office is now considering whether to ban the display of religious symbols in those religious institutions that receive federal funding.

It does not matter what the final decision is—we already know 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 new development.

On July 1, 2008, Obama said that if he became president 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. Last month, it was reported that a serious debate ensued in the White House whether to display

a manger scene at Christmastime. Now they're wondering whether to tell Catholic charitable offices to put a sheet over their 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.