

American beginnings: Private entities should rewrite their rules if necessary

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President Bush has urged large corporations and foundations to join government agencies in offering grants to faith-based organizations, adding that the private entities should rewrite their rules if they don't allow funding of religious charities.

"I believe all of us . . . ought to allow religious organizations to compete and function on an equal basis, not for the sake of faith but for the sake of results," he told about 1,200 people gathered March 9 for a national conference in Washington sponsored by the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives.

Bush's appeal came two days after he signed an executive order to open a center on faith-based and community initiatives to be opened within the Department of Homeland Security—the 11th such office within a federal agency—to help government and religious groups better coordinate relief after hurricanes and other disasters.

A report issued in February by a homeland security staff person found that while faith-based and other nongovernmental organizations provided "essential support" to hurricane victims, they "were not adequately integrated into the response effort."

As Bush appealed for nongovernmental grants to faith-based groups, the White House released new research showing that one in five large foundations of the 50 it studied were prohibiting funding for faith-based social service programs. "I would hope they would revisit their charters," Bush said. The report also found that only 6 percent of grants from 20 large corporate foundations went to religious charities. - *Religion News Service*