

Former White House aide says Bush failed on "poor people stuff." "The White House gets what the White House really wants.": "The White House gets what the White House really wants."

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A former deputy director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives says President Bush has failed to support the program as he had promised.

David Kuo, who left the position in December 2003, said the White House didn't push hard enough for Congress to deliver the \$8 billion Bush had promised to faith-based initiatives during his first year in office.

"From tax cuts to Medicare, the White House gets what the White House really wants," Kuo wrote in an essay for the Internet site Beliefnet. "It never really wanted the 'poor people stuff.'"

When Bush ran for president in 2000, he promised \$6 billion in charity tax incentives; \$1.7 billion for groups that cared for drug addicts, at-risk youth and teen moms; and \$200 million for a "Compassion Capital Fund," wrote Kuo, now a contributing editor for Beliefnet. "When he became the president, there was every reason to believe he'd be not only pro-life and pro-family, as conservatives tended to be, but also pro-poor, which was daringly radical," said Kuo.

But in June 2001, the tax incentives were dropped from Bush's tax cut to "make room for the estate-tax repeal that overwhelmingly benefited the wealthy," according to Kuo. The White House allocated \$600 million to other programs, which

is billions of dollars short of what was promised, he said.

“Who was going to hold them accountable? Drug addicts, alcoholics, poor moms, struggling urban social service organizations and pastors aren’t quite the NRA [National Rifle Association],” Kuo said. “Charities haven’t quite figured out the lobbying thing yet.”

Kuo said voicing his disappointments was difficult because of his “respect, appreciation and affection for the president.”

Added Kuo: “The White House can still do a great deal for the poor. It can add another few billion to ensure every American child has health care. It could launch a program to simply eliminate hunger.”

Asked for reaction to Kuo’s comments, Maria Tamburri, a White House spokeswoman, defended the work of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

“The faith-based and community initiative has been a priority to President Bush since the beginning of his first term and continues to be a priority,” Tamburri said in an interview.

“The president has mentioned the initiative in every state of the Union and has fought for funding for its important programs. The faith-based and community initiative has transformed the regulation landscape to enable faith-based and community organizations to compete fairly for federal funding to make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable citizens in communities across America.” - *Religion News Service*