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White House Faith-Based and Community Initiative
Innovations in Effective Compassion Conference

PANEL II: THE FUTURE OF INNOVATION IN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

PANEL MODERATOR MEDEFIND: We have covered a lot of territory over the last two days. And hopefully you will be ruminating over this for the next couple of weeks. And chew on everything you heard. This final panel is going to be looking forward, entirely looking forward, in a lot of ways. As we have talked about, as you have heard hopefully over and over again, there has been a lot of very, very significant things that have happened over the last seven and a half years. And a big part of that has been what we call the leveling of the playing field for faith-based groups. And so we have talked about that, about welcoming faith-based groups as equal partners. And that has profoundly changed the way that government approaches these types of issues.

We have also talked about shifting the way that government addresses need from very large and distant and bureaucratic to making it small and local and personal in a way that never had happened before. In a lot of ways, as we have talked about, really, at the heart of this vision is saying the government simply cannot address the most pressing issues that we face alone. And it will always be more effective when government brings what strengths it does have and draws together along with that small local groups, large nonprofits, secular groups that perhaps have no official religious tie but are just motivated by passion, religious groups that are completely committed to things because of their faith and driven by those things. We need all of those players if we are going to be serious about solving addiction problems, homelessness problems, malaria in Africa, and all of those things. And so what we are really emphasizing is that ultimately we need every player. And that is the effective way to engage things in the years to come. And this ultimately, as we have said many times, is not a Washington story. It is fundamentally a story about communities, about states, about municipalities, about local communities drawing together each of the best players in their area and working together to address the need.

And so for this last panel, what we are going to be doing is looking forward to various models that are happening all across the country to do just that, bringing together key players in an area and to engage these needs. And so, first of all, we are going to hear from Jannah Scott. Jannah works in Arizona for the Governor's Faith and Community Initiative, a Democratic governor, Janet Napolitano. They have their own initiative, and they are particularly focused on working with states to help advance this vision. Jannah is an amazing person. So please welcome Jannah Scott.

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MS. SCOTT: Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you, Jedd. I want to just take a moment of my eight minutes to really thank Jay and Jedd and Elizabeth and all of the White House staff for their great support of this initiative, especially over the last two years. I feel like in 2006, it was as if an eagle landed on Jackson Street and its wings spread over all 50 states. And the pragmatism, Jay, and the support and the encouragement that you and Jedd and Elizabeth and all your staff bring on behalf of the President, I just want you to know we really appreciate that. (Applause.)

I don't know if any of my other state liaison colleagues are here. There are 35 of us across the state. And if they are here, -- I see a couple of Minnesotans still here -- I would just like to ask them to stand because these are your people in state government who are really seeking to open doors at the state level and the local level to continue this initiative into the future. (Applause.)

We have Lee, Lee from Minnesota, another lady here from Utah. And there are still about 20 of us here. So I want you to know we are really interested in this. On behalf of Governor Napolitano, I just want to congratulate all the nonprofits who are here and to really say to you that if she were here today, she would congratulate you herself because, truly, you are the warriors of the armies of compassion that we hear the President and others speak about so much because, surely, many of you have had to war over the last seven years to really keep this thing going in local communities. And so we appreciate you for that.

I think as we come to a completion of seven years and the eighth year being new beginnings, it is only appropriate that we would end this conference talking about the future of the initiative. In Arizona, our motto is "Many Lands, Many Peoples, Many Faiths, One Arizona." And I think one of the most important issues that we have to face and we really should embrace is that the diversity of the faith community in the United States really encourages us to reach out to all faiths and to really connect them with our nonprofit what people like to call secular sectors, who really represent the infrastructure and the foundation of local communities. I think, as we are seeing in some states, particularly Arizona, we have been suffering some economic woes because of foreclosure prevention, rising gas prices, and things like that, that this sector is going to be more and more critical in the days and years to come. And so we look at not so much faith-based or community-based but, as the President has entitled this initiative, faith-based and community-based, working together.

I just want to share a little bit about the Arizona initiative and to say to you that, as we had developed this initiative in Arizona, we looked at it in terms of where we started in 2005. We were, as I said, the 33rd state to come on board. And when we started, we came in on the heels of Hurricane Katrina. And

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so our first involvement in this was to engage over 850 unaffiliated groups with the Arizona voluntary organizations active in disaster and to really get those groups connected with the longstanding groups like the Catholics, like the Lutherans, like the United Methodists, the Salvation Army, American Red Cross, people who had been doing that work for decades and in the case of the Red Cross for a century, and really allowing them to partner with those groups to get the work done.

As we have also worked on several other efforts, we have initiated this idea of a municipal initiative. It includes counties, too, but it is kind of convoluted to say municipal and county initiative. So we just call it the municipal initiative. It wasn't really started out of the governor's office, but it has been expanded as a result of the 2007 White House conference on faith and community initiatives that took place in Arizona. This initiative really started about ten years ago in the City of Phoenix, which, of course, is the largest city in the state, and in Maricopa County. Right now we have the potential to reach 90 cities and towns, 15 counties, and grateful for the involvement of the potential for 22 sovereign nations. To go through these quickly, this initiative is operating under the leadership of the Governor's Council on Faith and Community Initiatives. And it is chaired by one of the city's liaisons, the deputy chief of staff out of Phoenix mayor's office. One of our most critical partners to this is the Arizona League of Cities and Towns. Each state has a league connected to the national league. And they then give us entrance to all the mayors, the city councils, and in some cases connections to counties. Our partners also include businesses, faith-based and community organizations, of course. And, interestingly, the legislative chaplaincy has gotten into this to keep our legislators apprised of all that we are looking to do.

So, quickly, just how does it flow? It can be either initiated by an elected or an appointed official, a grass roots faith-based or community group, a business initiative, or a family concern rising to levels of influence. I just want to share how some of them have started. I will skip over that one for the sake of time. Right now we have 17 entities in various stages in the pipeline of the initiative, which started May of 2007, 8 we call operational, which basically means they have a functioning initiative, their elected official is involved, and they are doing something in one of the several issue areas that we speak about. We have four that are emerging. We have five that are promising. I want to talk about three of them, in particular, just quickly. The City of Phoenix's initiative was actually initiated by the concern for the business community to clean up the downtown area as they were about to go through some major redevelopment. But they knew enough, the business leaders, to partner with faith-based and community groups around the issue of homelessness. They brought the county to the table, the state Housing Department to the table, other cities

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to the table. And they were able over a long period of time with the help of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to leverage about \$25 million to build a campus of care for the homeless. And it is really a great example of all of the sectors working together but initiated by a business concern. The faith-based and community groups really are the foundation for that effort now, although there is still state and local involvement in terms of funding and federal involvement.

Another one I quickly want to talk about is the Town of Buckeye initiative, which was actually started by their chief of police. Buckeye is one of the fastest growing cities in the State of Arizona, possibly in the nation. Their police chief was concerned about the potential for crime. And he saw the ability of the faith-based groups to actually help prevent crime by reaching out to various people as they were coming into the town and by establishing programs that would help the young people as well as that would help for Block Watch and things like that.

Since then Buckeye has moved into the area of emergency preparedness. And they are our first city, actually, in the state to fund a faith-based intermediary. The third one I want to mention is Graham County. It is a rural county up in northeastern Arizona. Actually, three counties and the town have gotten together around the issues of the elderly and the youth. It was inspired by a grass roots faith-based group that really wanted to make sure that the towns were leveraging to the fullest potential possible the voluntary efforts that faith-based and community groups can provide. If I had more time, I could share with you some really interesting stories about all of these, but I do want to just as you look at the last slide, which is the list of some of the issues that we are involved in. And that turned from a bullet to an H. So that is interesting. (Laughter.)

I do want to say that one of the things that we appreciate most, you know, the Faith-Based and Community Initiative has reminded me so often of that movie Basic that John Travolta was in and Samuel L. Jackson, where at the beginning there was so much confusion about what actually had gone on, it was a war scene, but by the end of the movie, you realize as things began to get uncovered that it was really a good thing that was going on. And the line in the movie that I remember so well was "You've got to get the story right." And I think that Jay and his staff have done a phenomenal effort in getting this story right so that the future of the initiative, I believe, is very bright. Thank you. (Applause.)

PANEL MODERATOR MEDEFIND: Excellent. That list with the H's there was the very portrait of what this is. It's, you know, although there have been side shows and debates about church-state issues and funding

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issues, those things are significant, but ultimately this is a problem-solving strategy and saying we can be more effective when we approach things differently.

Well, if it is a problem-solving strategy that is working at the federal level, if you hear it is working at the state level, it is working at the municipal level, it also makes sense that others would take that strategy on, too. And so we are going to hear now from a representative of the private sector, CVS Corporation. Olivia Biggs is going to be actually standing in for Steve Wing. And she is going to be talking about a partnership that CVS took on as a problem-solving strategy working closely with front-line nonprofits to address a particular challenge that they as a corporation faced in partnership with the Department of Labor but led initially by CVS and working in partnership with local groups. So please welcome Olivia Biggs. (Applause.)

MS. BIGGS: I bring you greetings on behalf of Steve Wing. He sends his best regard. He could not be here today due to the illness of his wife. So we just want to keep him in our thoughts and our prayers. I am truly honored to represent him today. We are so excited about the faith-based and community initiatives all across the country. And we have been asked by the Committee to actually talk about why FBOs and community-based organizations were uniquely equipped to meet the needs of CVS Pharmacy and how we built our projects around that.

One thing that our company has found out over the years in being very aggressive with this nation's workforce investment initiatives is that it goes beyond the deficiency in skills development. Many of the issues that we see in our potential candidates are those really about making the right choices. It is about values. It is about having the right mindset to be successful at work. So because of the sensitivity of our faith-based organizations and their willingness to work with us, we were able to create some excited partnership all across the country. And, by the way, we have an HR strategy to work with these organizations. So we welcome your support.

I was also asked to talk a little bit about how do we do that. Well, first of all, it began with a commitment, a commitment from our top leadership that we would work with faith-based and community organizations and not only to top-level leadership. It also took training for some of the faith-based organizations, who were not accustomed to working with business. Because of our fine leadership at CVS, we were able to meet with those organizations and in many instances train them on how to, in fact, work with business. Another important factor of this, again, I must mention, it was the leadership. It is the focus

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and the vision of that faith-based organization that you care enough about the people you serve to align your organization with business. And that is where the rubber meets the road. I would just like to leave you today with a couple of tips in doing that because there are some fundamental strategies in working with business that I want to share with you today that Steve also had asked me to provide.

First of all, the alignment of your organization's goals and objectives to the business goals is very, very important. Most businesses, corporations, we're in business to make profit. Therefore, your programs that you put together for your people, design their HR strategy. Make sure that it can, in fact, save that business partner time or the cost of doing business. That is so critical.

Secondly, make sure that you meet with the decision-makers. Oftentimes we lose a lot of time because we meet with the wrong people. We want to make sure that we meet with the right decision-makers, be aware of the authority of the person that you're dealing with. He or she may not have the power to cut the deal. I can being a job developer many, many years ago. And, actually, it took me months to get some of the major corporations. But I put them in my tickler file, and I just never forgot about that target. So, again, we just want to encourage you to make sure that you talk with the right decision-makers. And also be patient. Be patient. Movement sometimes in the business world can be very, very slow. Give them the business cycle. So the decision-making processes can take much longer than you think. And we are very, very fortunate at CVS Pharmacy. Our CEO actually created a department to work with these types of initiatives. So while CVS is able to turn things around a little quicker, often sometimes in working with other businesses, they may not have that department available. And also remember equitable partnerships are important. Your negotiator will often have to explain what they are getting out of the partnership and what you are putting in. Be careful not to over-commit, not to over-commit for your potential candidates of employment. It's okay to start small. It's okay to start small and to grow that program and, in addition to making sure that that HR strategy is aligned with the employment training goals of the organization.

And last, but not least, competition is the game. Play is a part of the game. Before you approach that organization, make sure that you know who the major players are, who the competitors are on the business end of it because they would want to know who those competitors are. And, in closing, for long-term success, we leave you with attract the business community to work with you. Do not be afraid to sell your program. Make sure that you understand your employer's needs. Make the best match possible. Our motto with workforce initiatives is that we know that they are diamonds in the rough. It is a matter of us just working together to find those diamonds. Also remember to monitor the employer's satisfaction in your

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candidate's performance and provide ongoing support that will take your partnership to the next level. And last, but not least, make no small plans for they have no power to stir up the soul. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

PANEL MODERATOR MEDEFIND: If you are interested in actually knowing more about the specifics of that partnership between CVS and local FBCOs and the Department of Labor, that and many other pieces of research are actually going to be on that HHS Web site that you learned about. CVS has filled thousands and thousands of jobs by working with local nonprofit partners that have the capacity to identify people, help them place in jobs, and then walk with them to help them succeed in those jobs. And so that is one great example there of a very effective partnership between private sector, nonprofits, and government.

Well, let's look now at a very different set of challenges, moving from a corporation's interest in getting quality employees that will continue working with them for an extended period of time to a community that has been devastated by floods in Hurricane Katrina. Hal Roark leads the Broadmoor community development organization that is helping lead that type of networking bringing together every willing partner in the Broadmoor neighborhood of New Orleans. I heard him speak in New Orleans about a month or two ago. Actually, a few weeks ago I received a phone call from a writer who asked me. He said, "I am writing a book on passion, and I want to identify some people around the country whom you would say have particular passion for things." I said, "Well, one guy you should talk to is Hal Roark. He has a passion for his neighborhood. He loves it, and he is rebuilding it with a whole lot of great people." So here is Hal to tell you about that. (Applause.)

MR. ROARK: Good afternoon, everybody. It is great to be here with you. In fact, I called my wife yesterday after I was here and sitting in the back, like many of you, and taking notes. And I called my wife later. She said, you know, "How is the conference going?" I said, "You are not going to believe this, but the President was speaking today." And, you know, it's just official after official after official. I have to tell you it has been an enormously long road to go from Broadmoor to the White House. And I mean that spiritually, emotionally, psychologically. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine that I would be at a place like this representing -- (Applause.) Thank you. -- the people of my neighborhood in New Orleans. (Applause.) Thank you. I'm just an average guy. I'm not a government official. I was a small business owner pre-Katrina. And what I am here to do, really, this afternoon is be a demonstration of the power of what these

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partnerships can do because I think it is very, very clear when you see the outcomes and the challenges we have had. We have had enormous challenges. And the outcomes are equally successful. So let's get into it, and let's show you a little bit about what these are. My neighborhood is 7,000 people, 2,400 buildings. If you look at the whole City of New Orleans and you kind of go south a little bit, that southern-most tip that's in kind of the bay there of the Mississippi River as it drips, that is my entire neighborhood. All 7,000 people, all 2,400 buildings get wet. I live in Broadmoor. My house gets seven feet of water. All of this was displaced from the storm. And you can see some photos of some of the things that happened and what it caused. The damage was pretty horrific. Things were picked up and moved. Do you remember seeing those photos where you saw -- I got a call from a buddy of mine in California, who said, "I'm seeing the strangest thing. I'm seeing a house on fire in water. How is that possible?" And I said, "I don't really know. Is it my house?" (Laughter.)

You know, you go home. And what happens is the water picks things up. It moves things. My refrigerator on my first floor was actually in the living room. It picks up gas water heaters and dryers and moves them. And what happens is when you move that and say it's a gas dryer and it moves, it breaks the gas bond. The utility company turns the service off. And when they turn it back on again, it can often spark. And the whole house goes up. And so the amount of damage has been truly huge and surprising. Here is the real world challenge. Okay? You're in my shoes. You're in our shoes, the 7,000 of us in Broadmoor. You want to come back. You want to rebuild. Some people did not want to rebuild. That was eight percent of the neighborhood. Ninety-two percent wanted to come back. Real world. What are you going to do? Every government building in Broadmoor destroyed, the roads destroyed, 7,000 people displaced, 2,400 buildings destroyed, public school destroyed, local library destroyed, every tree my wife and I -- my business is pre-Katrina. We were in real estate. We had seven rental properties. Every tree and bush died on all the properties. We lost thousands of trees in Broadmoor alone because it wasn't just water in that water. There was some nasty stuff, 2,000 cars lost with gasoline and motor oil and other things in the water. Real world. How are you going to come back?

Our challenge wasn't just to sit up and say, "Fix it for us. Do it for us." Quite frankly -- and I mean no disrespect speaking at a White House conference because they actually would be buying into the same flaws we do -- we did not believe that government was going to solve all of our problems for us, nor did we want government to solve all the problems for us. Now, you want that in a way emotionally, right? You want someone else to take care of it for you. But the real world is the problems are so huge and complex that

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that is not going to happen. And so we developed a phrase, which was, "We have to be the cavalry we want to see coming over the hill because if we don't do this for ourselves, no one is going to do it for us." But you have to develop a strategy to do that. And our strategy was partnerships. And we said very clearly - - and these are the six petals of the partnership -- we believe these six groups for everything we do will look to partner with us to solve our problems. First and foremost, it is going to be citizen-driven. What I have not mentioned so far is that our neighborhood was slated to be destroyed. There was an outside group of urban planners that came into the city, into the state, made recommendations to the city. And they said our neighborhood should literally be mowed down with bulldozers and destroyed. Now, we have a word for that in Broadmoor. We call that a "really bad day." (Laughter.)

And so the experts come in. It doesn't matter that a third of us is a nationally historic neighborhood. When they want to mow you down, that is a really bad day. We rebelled because we said, "Look, we are the world experts on Broadmoor. We know it better than anybody else. We know the issues in terms of crime and drugs and streets and traffic and all the rest. If you want to know what the problems are and solutions are, at least we should be involved at the table." "We're not saying that we know urban planning as well as urban planners. We recognize and need their competency. But we know this neighborhood. We know this patch of dirt better than anybody." And, frankly, in the Twenty-First Century, what this Office of the White House has so perfectly right is that in the Twenty-First Century, government will not be the sole solution to problems. (Applause.)

It can't be. I mean just think of this practically. It cannot be. And the reason why is because universities have expertise; corporations have expertise; and, frankly, residents have expertise for these social problems that concern us. I mean, listen to all of the things that we have been hearing about for the last two days: HIV, prisoner reentry, homelessness. These are problems which the people that are affected by it have real person interest with being involved. And the more we can involve the folks affected, the greater the social capital that can come out of it and, frankly, the better the solutions. So what we said was we're always going to look at involving residents, universities, faith communities explicitly, private sector, government, and developers. And what I want to do is show you three quick examples of the real outcomes we have produced in our neighborhood as a result of that.

The citizen involvement in the Keller Library has been our Broadmoor Improvement Association Keller Library Committee. Schools have been M.I.T., Bard, Harvard, the Accounting School of Simon's Rock, and then local schools, actually, from D.C.'s National Cathedral School and St. Albans heard about

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us. And their kids raised books and had a book drive and sent them to us. Faith communities: St. Columbus, the Episcopal diocese of Quincy, the Jewish youth groups. Private sector, we have CH2M Hill, Rosa Mary Foundation, the Keller Foundation, Carnegie Corporation, AT&T, Mercy Corps, Officer Recovery Management, New Orleans Public Library Board. Developers: Eskew, Dumez, and Ripple. The bottom line here on this library project is we in that partnership have raised over \$3 million to turn that library from an old-fashioned library to a new Twenty-First Century library that is digital, that is interactive, that is focusing on workforce development, and that can be a meeting place for us as we come back.

Example number two, Wilson School. We had a school that was such a poor performing public school I honestly could not tell you what the name of the school was when we moved in. My wife was a public school teacher. Most of the public school teachers in New Orleans don't send their kids to public schools because they were pre-Katrina such poorly performing public schools. I'm telling you it's bizarre for a developer to move into a neighborhood and not even look at the public school. Think about it where you come from home. Public schools are one of the things that drive property values in communities. Not to even consider it is a major statement about how bad things were. One of the first things we did when we got control of our neighborhood was to say, "We are going to eliminate the public school and create our own charter school." And we did. That involved again citizens of Broadmoor, Charter School Board, Bard, Harvard, different faith communities, private sector, government. The bottom line is we have raised through different areas, including green groups, over \$20 million to bring that school back as a cutting-edge school that is also going to include the YMCA meeting room place, think community hub center for the elderly and kids. You know, you have got a school that is a huge asset. Why aren't we using that on weekends and nights? Why aren't we doing other things for our youth? Why aren't we using the gym to empower people?

And why aren't we doing whatever, frankly, the community says it wants out of the community school, yoga classes, ESL classes? That is the vision. The third example is a partnership created between my organization, the Broadmoor Development Corporation. Now, by the way, don't be too impressed by the coat and tie because that's not what I usually wear. And, truthfully, we are a small organization of only three people. Okay? I have been talking with folks who are here. Many of you are also small nonprofits wondering, how does this stuff apply to us? We are less than two years that we have been around, and we only have a full-time staff of three. We are very, very small. And our challenges are great. And if we can pull these partnerships together, you can pull these partnerships together. This last partnership is a great example between my organization, which got a grant from the Surdna Foundation to hire case managers

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that go out into the fields, visit people in the FEMA trailers and their homes to find out what their needs are. A local Episcopal church called the Church of the Annunciation evicted themselves from their own second story dorm unit offices, created a dorm space for 100 people, where they can house and feed 100 folks at a time. And then we work with Rebuilding Together, which is a national organization. Habitat is better known, but Habitat uses volunteers to do new construction. And we don't have any new construction at Broadmoor. It is all renovation of existing buildings. And so Rebuilding Together is the better national partner for us. I am pleased to say that we have over 100 kids with us this week. We have over ten houses being renovated right now with our volunteers identified by my case manager. And they are also working with Rebuilding Together. And the outcome of that is that of the 73 neighborhoods of New Orleans, we're leading the recovery at 72.3 percent. If you look at the yellow and orange -- (Applause.)

Thank you. If you look at the yellow and the orange, that represents properties and their damage. And what we are looking at here as it moves to green is that they are properties in full recovery. Over 3 million for Killer, 25 million for Wilson, the Broadmoor, the BIA, the Broadmoor Improvement Association, Annunciation, Rebuilding Together partnership generates over 3 million a year in volunteer labor, especially from faith communities and university kids that come down and help us. If I could leave you with two tips, the tip number one is this of why we have been successful. It is not our size. It is not our longevity. We are a brand new group. Number one, I would be really clear about who you are and what your vision is. People want to support -- and I heard this echoed in the comments from CVS. People want to align themselves with people that share their vision and values. So be really clear about what you believe. If you have a faith community stance, don't water that down because people want to partner with you and be with you because of that stance.

And then the last thing is, make it easy for people to help you. As a final note, just as a story, we literally have 101 kids this week at our facility working with us on homes. And we have eight Broadmoorians this week that went with the church invitation. They are members also. They are in Quincy today filling sand bags and working with those folks who have been displaced by the flood. It is not because we are done. We still have 28 percent of Broadmoor that we need to get out of FEMA trailers and back in their homes, but, frankly, for those who whom much has been given, much is required. And we are giving back already to help other people who have been displaced by the flood because we are uniquely qualified to understand how painful that is. And it is just an honor to be here to represent what we are doing. Thank you. (Applause.)

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PANEL MODERATOR MEDEFIND: Thank you, Hal. All right. For our last speaker, we are going to go back to the states. And so we kind of have bookended this session starting with an A state, Arizona, down to the southern end of things, led by a Democratic governor. Now we're going to go to the northern end of things with Alaska, led by a Republican governor. Scott Merriner is -- actually, you have got to look at his bio. It is one of the more fascinating ones I have seen there. B.A. from Harvard, Rhodes scholar, Oxford, analyst with the CIA, management consultant for McKinsey, but then also a commercial fisherman in the Bering Sea and big game guide. So what else can he possibly do? Well, he is also a pastor, and he is a co-chair of Alaska Governor's Advisory Council on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative. And so he is going to give us a little window into what the vision is looking like there in the hinterlands of the north. (Applause.)

MR. MERRINER: Thank you for that introduction. I wish you hadn't told them I'm a pastor because now they're all thinking, "Oh, no. You've given the last person speaking the microphone, and he's a pastor. We're in real trouble." (Laughter.)

Well, it is an honor to be here. And I do bring you a warm welcome from your colleagues who, just like you, are working every day to mobilize the armies of compassion to meet real needs in our neighborhoods and in our cities and in our states. And, you know, Alaska was quick to jump on the band wagon of this vision that President Bush rolled out. In 2002, the then governor, lieutenant governor, asked me to chair a task force that would look into this. We recommended the creation of an office, which happened in January 2005. And a lot of work has gotten done, and it needed to because although I am extremely proud of our state, there is something I am not that proud of. And that is the fact that if you look across the basket of social indicators, you would be familiar with all of them. And you would do kind of a weighted average. Alaska is at the bottom of the list with the least healthy communities overall of any of our 50 states. So although I am proud to say we were quick to jump on this initiative, it is really because we had to.

But you know what? So does every state because none of the social indicators are acceptable anywhere in our country, not here in D.C., not in Guam, and not in Anchorage, Alaska. We have real people who have real needs. I am excited about this topic that we are doing in our panel here, "The Future of Innovative Community Partnerships," because I do believe that what we have been doing in Alaska has some unique applications for this topic. The mission statement of the Alaska Office of Faith-

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Based and Community Initiative -- let me read the statement to you. It says, "The office will improve the well-being of Alaskans by strengthening and expanding the contributions of faith-based and community initiatives." And it lists three ways it will do this. The first one is this, "By fostering partnerships between and among government, faith, and community groups." So innovative community partnerships has been the top priority of the office now for several years. We have learned a lot about this. I have only got a couple of minutes. So what I want to do today is not give you lots of detail about any specific model. I will give a few examples. I want to give you three kind of big conclusions that I have taken away about innovative community partnerships and then kind of one over-arching implication certainly for us in Alaska, but I think, really, for all of us around the country in every state.

The first conclusion is this. Innovative community partnerships are possible. They are. I will give you an example. Last year the office in Alaska helped launch a new program in Anchorage, which is our largest city, they call Homeless Connect. Now, Homeless Connect is a one-day event held twice a year. And it involves virtually every organization in the city that touches the population groups. Let me read you some of the outcomes of the first one we held last July. "Over 300 homeless participants were served by 35 different public, private, and nonprofit, both faith-based and secular, service providers. "Twenty-three percent of participants were heads of households with children under 18. Ninety-four people received housing information, 53 completing housing applications. "Twenty-eight substance abuse and mental health screenings were given; 22 HIV tests completed; 255 bags of groceries handed out; 75 showers provided; 60 haircuts given; 15 TB tests, which is a huge issue in Alaska. "Forty-five appointments were made for additional health care services. And 56 received employment referrals," all of that in one day in a city of only 250,000 people. (Applause.)

Nothing like it had ever happened before. That is a remarkable, remarkable outcome, transformational, in fact. Innovative community partnerships are possible. Secondly, they are essential. They are not optional. And the reason is this. The biggest challenges we face in our communities, the great human needs that we have been talking about here the past two days, homelessness, substance abuse, at-risk youth, et cetera, they are not going to be solved any other way. They just aren't. It has been said by others already today, but because I am a pastor, perhaps I can be even a little more blunt. Government and secular philanthropists who believe that they can solve these problems without enlisting the aid of faith-based organizations are living in fantasy land. They really are. (Applause.) MR. MERRINER: They need the help of the tens of millions of Americans who are motivated to do so by their faith. But it works both ways as

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well. Faith leaders can live in a fantasy land also, believing that somehow they can make innovative transformational contributions to the greatest needs in their community without partnering with government and secular organizations. Now, I am here to tell you that is not possible. If faith leaders truly desire to contribute to transformational change, they can't avoid partnership with government and secular organizations. The fact that these innovative community partnerships are essential has been made crystal clear to me this last year as we have made solving the challenges of Alaska's foster care system our number one priority. You know, addressing the needs of foster kids in a foster system, it's massively important for Alaska, but one of the things I've learned in my research this year is it is actually pretty darned important for about every one of our states. Foster kids are -- (Applause.)

Yes, that is worthy applause. Here is what I have learned after a year of workshops and meetings and nationwide research. I have two things abundantly clear. Firstly, the only way that our state can ever hope to provide even minimally acceptable experience for the thousands of children that it takes into custody each year is to enlist the untapped resources of the faith communities, which are staggering and which is the only resource pool possibly big enough to close that gap. In fact, here is what is remarkable. I estimate that if just the top ten largest churches in our state really made this a priority, we could completely close all of the gaps in our foster care delivery system, just the top ten churches. (Applause.)

That's clear, but so is a second thing. If faith leaders in Alaska want to make that kind of transformational difference in our state and in our foster children, they must be willing to partner deeply with government organizations and secular organizations that are also serving that same group of kids. Now, are these partnerships common? No. We wish. Do they require creativity and innovation? Absolutely. But are they optional? Absolutely not. They are essential if we want to create the kind of America whose future is brighter than the past and the present. But it is not just going to happen by itself. And it leads me to my third conclusion. Innovative community partnerships are hard work. They are difficult to create. They are difficult to sustain, even when you think they should be easy. I learned that a couple of years ago as we tried to tackle one of the other great issues in Alaska, which is rural suicide rates many times higher than the national average. It gets a lot of attention in Alaska in the media. And there are a lot of resources, federal money, state money, tribal money, and people working hard to reduce the unacceptable rate of teen suicide in our rural communities. I thought to myself, this one is a no-brainer because as soon as we looked at it, we realized, my goodness. All of these teams go out and do workshops of suicide prevention around the state. They're flying to these towns and villages. Then when there is a suicide, they fly teams in to deal

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with the crisis in the days afterwards. But here is what we realized. They completely ignored the fact that in every single village and town, there were faith leaders, priests and pastors, living there 365 days a year completely ignored by this large initiative. What a no-brainer. Let's get them together. Well, it may have been a no-brainer, but I'm telling you it has been tough work to create a lasting and sustaining innovative partnership. Lots of progress has been made. We have had pilot programs that have delivered great success.

But I have been sobered by the reality of how hard it is to create and sustain a true and lasting innovative partnership. That includes parties from both the faith-based and the secular and governmental sides of the camp. The challenges are many. Sometimes they are structural. In this case, for example, the religious leaders were really fragmented, not really one or two groups you could go talk to. So that's a structural challenge. Sometimes the challenges are emotional, both groups concerned about the implications of partnering with each other and what that would create. Sometimes they are intellectual, misunderstandings about what is allowed under the First Amendment of the Constitution or, as we heard earlier, kind of secular professionals, really not wanting to create the space, as one of the speakers said, for those who come from a faith perspective. We wrestled with both of those things on this suicide initiative. My point is this. These partnerships are difficult, even when you think they ought to be easy. Innovative community partnerships are devilishly hard to pull off, to create and sustain. And that leads me to my overarching implication I want to share with you, and it is this. These innovative community partnerships, which are possible and essential for our country going forward, are not going to be created and are not going to be sustained unless state governments and city governments dedicate hard-working men and women to making them happen. They won't. And I am so thrilled we have got 35 states and now Guam with liaisons and offices around there, but 35 is not enough. We need 50 plus Guam and Puerto Rico and anywhere else we can go.

The future of this initiative is not going to be dictated by what happens here in Washington with the transition in administrations. It just won't. Now, it is important, of course, but it doesn't live or die here. It lives or dies right where you and I live and die, in our states and in our cities. (Applause.)

So here is my challenge to all of you, especially those of you who are out there like myself plugging away in community and faith organizations. Make sure you remember to lift your eyes to your state leaders, to your city leaders, and tell them how critical it is that there at least would be a few. We have seen how far just three can go. And that is how many we have, by the way, in our office in Alaska, just a few dedicated

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and passionate women and men who will do the hard day in/day out work of bringing us all to the table, holding our feet to the fire, and saying, "These innovative partnerships are not only possible. They're essential. And we're going to do it." Thank you (Applause.)

PANEL MODERATOR MEDEFIND: All right. Thank you, Scott. Well, great human needs, great challenges to a future partnership, but at the same time a great record of accomplishment thus far, and great, great promise for the years to come. And now, as we are coming to the close of our plenary time together, I want to make sure you know about one last opportunity, one last treat we have. The final set of workshops this afternoon, we could kind of call them dessert to the conference. There are approximately 15 brand new research papers. We had talked earlier today about how challenging it has been to get new research, serious research looking at innovative partnerships and the way that government and faith-based groups work together and the unique role of faith groups and the unique role of small secular community nonprofits to solving problems. And so we have a group of brand new research that has not been presented publicly yet spread throughout those workshops this afternoon. Also we would like you to note that on your tables or in your packets, I guess, you should have an evaluation sheet for the conference. We would really value any feedback that you would be willing to put into that, both the positives and the negatives, things that we can continue to learn from, because, as we said, innovative is ongoing. And, with that, I would like to thank each and every one of you for being a central part of what this is all about and for continuing to do that in the years ahead. (Applause.)