

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

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Contact: Rebecca Neale
202-456-7348

**WHITE HOUSE *COMPASSION IN ACTION* ROUNDTABLE HIGHLIGHTS CRITICAL
ROLE OF NONPROFITS IN DISASTER PREPARATION AND RESPONSE**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI), joined by U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, today convened a *Compassion in Action* policy roundtable entitled, “Partnerships in Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery: The Role of Faith-Based and Community Organizations in Building Resilient Communities.” Hosted by OFBCI Director Jay Hein, the Roundtable underscored the critical and increasing role of faith-based and community organizations in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

“The President's commitment to working in close partnership with nonprofit organizations has been unparalleled, and our department is more effective because of it,” said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. “Faith based and community organizations can play a vital role in planning, preparedness and response efforts, and we'll continue to work closely with them.”

Today's event highlighted ways public-private partnerships are boosting the quality of aid delivered to individuals and communities in the wake of disaster. Effective disaster preparation, response and recovery are increasingly defined by cross-sector collaboration that draws upon the complementary strengths of public, private and nonprofit sector players. Faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs), in particular, add much to these partnerships through their established role in the community, existing infrastructure, unique ability to mobilize resources and human capital, and other capabilities complementary to those of government. As disaster recovery models transition from government-centered delivery of services to innovative community-based partnerships, the role of FBCOs remains vital to ensuring that communities are equipped to respond effectively to both the short- and long-term impact of disasters.

“In the aftermath of disaster, America's armies of compassion are among the first responders extending a hand to their neighbors and helping rebuild distressed communities. Today, we applaud these compassionate Americans and explore innovative partnerships to strengthen their service,” said OFBCI Director Jay Hein.

Recognizing the critical role of America's nonprofits in disaster recovery and rebuilding, the Federal government works to engage these vital allies and extend their efforts to meet critical community needs. For example, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, in partnership with USA Freedom Corps, FEMA and other public- and private-sector players, strengthened the National Response Framework, the nation's guide for domestic disaster response, to ensure coordinated efforts and effective utilization of skilled volunteers. Additionally, a host of Federal efforts ranging from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, which supplies food to disaster relief organizations for mass distribution, to the U.S. Department of

Housing and Urban Development's HOME Investment Partnerships to help rebuild disaster-torn areas, are engaging FBCOs to help rebuild neighborhoods and restore lives. To aid with international disasters, the Federal government partners with non-government organizations through the U.S. Agency for International Development to help impact disaster-torn areas.

Moreover, since President Bush launched Citizen Corps in 2002, to engage volunteer activities to help communities prepare for disasters through multi-sector engagement, nearly \$150 million has been distributed to States and territories to build community preparedness. Extending the President's vision for a culture of volunteer service, Citizen Corps currently operates 2,343 local Councils, which serve nearly 224 million people, or 78% of the total U.S. population.

Today's dialogue on the critical role of America's nonprofit sector will be further explored at a White House Conference on Disaster Relief and Preparedness on May 29 and 30, in New Orleans. The Conference will also offer tools and training for social service organizations as they work to rebuild and sustain their communities.

President Bush's Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) is built from the conviction that the most effective way to address our communities' great needs is to draw upon the unique strengths of every willing community and faith-based partner. He launched the FBCI upon taking office in January 2001, to strengthen America's nonprofit sector and extend its work in partnership with government. Since April 2006, the OFBCI has convened monthly Compassion in Action policy roundtables to discuss issues of interest faith- and community-based organizations and highlight honor the successes of dedicated Americans helping their neighbors in need.

For more information on the OFBCI and the President's compassion agenda, visit:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbc/>.

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