

Faith-based Initiatives and Charitable Choice

Toni Van Pelt

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The Obama administration recently announced an expansion of government funding for so-called "faith-based initiatives," in which taxpayer dollars are doled out to sectarian religious organizations for the performance of social service programs. This government funding raises legal and constitutional concerns that the administration has yet to address directly. In February, the Center for Inquiry produced a position paper that called for an end to government funding of faith-based programs. Because government funding is scheduled to continue, the Center for Inquiry further recommended the adoption and vigorous enforcement of specific minimum safeguards to protect church-state separation and religious liberty.

CfI performed a detailed historical study of federal funding for faith-based programs, extending from the rise of "charitable choice" legislation during the Clinton administration through the explosion of taxpayer funding for religious programs under George W. Bush's Faith Based and Community Initiative. The position paper that resulted from this study expresses deep misgivings about government funding of sectarian religious programs. CfI cited concerns that these programs may use taxpayer dollars to support or favor religious activities and beliefs; that government may give preference to particular religious organizations in doling out funds; and that under current standards, recipients of taxpayer funding for faith-based programs are allowed to engage in employment discrimination on the basis of religion.

Toni Van Pelt will discuss the Center for Inquiry's position paper, its recommendations, and describe how the CfI Office of Public Policy lobbies Congress on these issues.

Toni Van Pelt is Vice President for the Center for Inquiry and Director of its Office of Public Policy in Washington, D.C. She has successfully introduced the Center for Inquiry into the world of national legislative and policy communities. As the lobbyist for the Center she asks Congressional members and staff to base law and policy on scientific fact and empirical evidence as opposed to faith. She lobbies for state-church separation; women and lesbian-gay rights; and defense of democracy and secularism. She participates in coalitions with like-minded organizations on issues of mutual concern.

**Saturday, Jan 9, 2010
1:30 pm**

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Theories of Personality: Why We Do the Things We Do

The study of personality looks at the patterns of behavior and predispositions that determine how a person perceives, thinks, feels, and acts. Research over the years has asked: Is personality biologically based, psychodynamic, learned behavior, or free will that determines who we are? What are the guidelines for mental health and do they differ between the sexes or with changes in social milieu?

Recent findings in genetic and neuronal research have focused a new light on the connection between personality, behavior, and moods. Today, psychologist Karen Shanor discusses the various theories of person-

ality and therapeutic approaches within the framework of cutting-edge research to highlight what constitutes good—and poor— mental health, and where research is heading in creating a deeper understanding of why we differ.

Shanor is a lecturer at Georgetown University and a clinical and neuropsychologist in private practice.

When: Saturday, March 6, 2010, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Agenda:

- 10 to 11 a.m. Prominent Theories and Therapeutic Approaches Reconsidered (Psychodynamic, behavioral, cognitive, humanistic.)
- 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Recent Findings in Brain Research (Changes in brain processing; genetic interactivity and change.)
- 12:15 to 1:15 p.m. Lunch (Participants provide their own lunch.)
- 1:15 to 2:15 p.m. Memory and Mood (Undoing stress-related brain damage. Strategies for heightened functioning.)
- 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Connecting the Dots (Implications for self-improvement as well as updated therapeutic approaches.)

Cost: Member \$85, Gen Adm \$131, Sr. Member \$76

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