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**Exploring the Social Welfare Policies of the US during George W. Bush: Faith Based
and Community Initiatives as a Case Study**

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Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture**

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Abstract

With a vision to redefine the relationship between government and civil society, the Faith-Based and Community Initiative under President George W. Bush marked a turning point in the integration of religious organizations into federal social welfare programs. The present research explores the historical and conceptual development of social welfare in the United States, highlighting the longstanding moral and material contributions of faith-based organizations. It examines how these institutions transitioned from informal community actors to formal policy partners, particularly in response to political shifts and constitutional negotiations. The study provides a detailed analysis of the evolution of welfare policy across presidential administrations, emphasizing the increasing space granted to religious voices in public service. Central to this work is an investigation into how the Bush administration institutionalized faith-government partnerships, and what legal, political, and ethical challenges emerged in the process. Additionally, this research evaluates the outcomes and implications of faith-based initiatives on welfare delivery, both domestically and internationally. Through this historical and analytical approach, the dissertation offers insights into the changing boundaries of church and state in the pursuit of social justice in a democratic society.

الملخص

في إطار رؤية تهدف إلى إعادة تعريف العلاقة بين الحكومة والمجتمع المدني، شكّلت مبادرة الشراكة المجتمعية والدينية التي أطلقها الرئيس جورج وولكر بوش نقطة تحول في دمج المنظمات الدينية ضمن برامج الرعاية الاجتماعية الفيدرالية في الولايات المتحدة. يستعرض هذا البحث الحالي التطور التاريخي و المفاهيمي لنظام الرعاية الاجتماعية الأمريكي، مبرزاً المساهمات الأخلاقية والمادية المستمرة للمنظمات الدينية في هذا المجال. كما تدرس كيفية انتقال هذه المؤسسات من كونها جهات فاعلة غير رسمية في المجتمع إلى شركاء معترف بهم في السياسات العامة، لا سيما في ضوء التحولات السياسية والمناقشات الدستورية. تقدم الدراسة تحليلاً مفصلاً لتطور السياسات الاجتماعية عبر الإدارات الرئاسية، مع التركيز على توسّع مشاركة الأصوات الدينية في تقديم الخدمات العامة. وتتمحور الأطروحة حول تحليل كيفية قيام إدارة بوش بإضفاء الطابع المؤسسي على الشراكات بين الدولة والمنظمات الدينية، وما ترتب على ذلك من تحديات قانونية وسياسية وأخلاقية. إضافةً إلى ذلك، تقيم هذه الدراسة نتائج وتأثيرات المبادرات الدينية على آليات تقديم الرعاية الاجتماعية على الصعيدين المحلي والدولي. ومن خلال هذا المنهج التاريخي والتحليلي، يقدم هذا البحث رؤى حول حدود العلاقة المتغيرة بين الدين و الدولة في سبيل تحقيق العدالة الاجتماعية في مجتمع ديمقراطي .

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
ATR	Access to Recovery
CAP	Community Action Program
CCF	Compassion Capital Fund
CSBG	Community Services Block Grant
EO	Executive Order
EOA	Economic Opportunity Act
ESRD	End-Stage Renal Disease
FBCI	Faith-Based and Community Initiative
FBCO	Faith-Based and Community Organization
FBO	Faith-Based Organization
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GME	Graduate Medical Education
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
OASI	Old-Age and Survivors Insurance
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
QIO	Quality Improvement Organization
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
SSDI	Social Security Disability Insurance
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
WIA	Workforce Investment Act

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Introduction

Religion has long played an exceptional role in shaping the moral and civic imagination of American society. In contrast to the growing secularism seen in many Western nations, the United States continues to intertwine religious expression with national identity, civic duty, and public service. From the early colonial settlements through contemporary social movements, religious institutions have served not only as spiritual sanctuaries or shaped cultural norms, but as platforms for education, advocacy, and care. Faith continues to influence political debates, charitable initiatives, and institutional frameworks, reflecting a national ethos where religion and democracy coexist in a complex, often contested, relationship.

The concept of social welfare in the United States has similarly evolved through a mixture of moral vision and institutional necessity. Early forms of aid were largely informal, rooted in community responsibility and often facilitated by religious groups (mostly voluntary). As industrialization transformed the social fabric, the need for organized, state-supported welfare became more apparent. As defined by scholars such as Richard M. Titmuss and Walter A. Friedländer social welfare emphasize not just the distribution of resources but the ethical commitments embedded in such systems. At its core, it is an expression of collective care and an institutional arrangement aimed at addressing poverty, inequality, and exclusion through structured support. In United States, social welfare has grown from small, community-based efforts into large, organized systems, continually shaped by the belief that society has a shared responsibility to care for those facing poverty, inequality, and social exclusion.

Bridging these two traditions, the relationship between religion and welfare has always been active, if not always formalized. One of the forms religion takes in welfare (politics) is

the emergence of Faith-based organizations as critical service providers, offering education, shelter, healthcare, and food assistance, often in neighborhoods where public services were scarce or absent. These organizations draw upon both moral imperative and grassroots connection to respond to human needs. However, their growing role in public service has led to ongoing debates about how religion and government can work together without crossing legal or constitutional lines.

This tension reached a defining moment with the launch of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) under President George W. Bush. Drawing on his experience as Governor of Texas, Bush emphasized the potential of small, community-rooted organizations (Most of them are religious) to address social ills more effectively than government bureaucracies. He believed that these organizations, grounded in moral conviction and personal connection to their communities, could deliver services with compassion and efficiency. Bush frequently invoked the idea that government should support, not suppress, the good work being done by churches, synagogues, mosques, and other faith-based institutions. His concept of “compassionate conservatism” sought to balance traditional conservative principles with an ethic of social responsibility, advocating for welfare reform that empowered individuals and communities rather than expanding centralized federal programs.

Shortly after taking office in 2001, Bush issued executive orders establishing the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. He also directed federal agencies, including the Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Education, and Justice, to create their own faith-based offices. These administrative changes were designed to level the playing field for faith-based providers by removing regulatory barriers that had previously excluded them from receiving federal funds. The initiative

introduced technical assistance programs, intermediary grant mechanisms, and outreach strategies to support smaller organizations unfamiliar with federal grant systems. While the FBCI was praised for expanding the reach and flexibility of public service delivery, it also raised serious legal and political concerns. Critics questioned whether the initiative blurred constitutional boundaries, favored certain religious perspectives, or created inequities in how funding was distributed. Nevertheless, the FBCI marked a transformative chapter in American welfare policy, institutionalizing partnerships between the federal government and religious organizations in unprecedented ways.

The purpose of this research is to examine how this initiative functioned, what it revealed about American social welfare policy, and how it reflected broader ideological and institutional shifts. It explores how religious organizations moved from the periphery to the center of welfare discourse, and how federal policies adapted to accommodate their inclusion. This study considers the implications of these changes for democratic governance, legal integrity, and the ethical responsibilities of public institutions.

The research aims to answer several interrelated questions that structure the core of this dissertation: How has the US welfare system evolved across the 20th and early 21st centuries in response to shifting political ideologies, economic pressures, and social needs? What was the historical role of religious organizations particularly Christian faith-based nonprofits, in delivering welfare services, and how has this role changed over time? How did the leadership and policy decisions of US presidents from Truman through Clinton shape the federal approach to welfare and influence the inclusion or exclusion of faith-based actors? In what ways did the Faith-Based and Community Initiative under President George W. Bush institutionalize religious participation in federally funded welfare programs? What were the main legal, ethical, and constitutional challenges raised by the FBCI's implementation,

especially concerning the Establishment Clause? How did the initiative affect funding mechanisms, accountability structures, and perceptions of fairness among both religious and secular service providers?

To better situate this research, it is important to consider existing literature that has addressed the intersection of social welfare and religion in the United States. Several key works have contributed to defining the moral foundations of welfare, the role of religious organizations in social service, and the constitutional challenges of church-state collaboration. The concept of social welfare has been extensively explored in academic literature, with scholars offering diverse definitions and theoretical frameworks. Rengasamy in his famous article entitled "Social Welfare Administration" highlights Richard Titmuss's view of social welfare as a state-driven mechanism to address needs unmet by the market, emphasizing economic stability and social justice. Similarly, Stanislav Percic in his academic report "Social Welfare: A Synthetic Analysis From the Perspective of the Main Schools of Economic Thought" discusses Walter Friedländer's holistic approach, which integrates material support with community well-being. *"The Changing Position of Philanthropy"*, a book written by Dickinson Frank Greene, examines the historical shift from private charity to structured welfare systems, while Howard Glennerster traces the post-WWII expansion of welfare states in his report, entitled "The Post War Welfare State: Stages and Disputes". These works collectively establish social welfare as a dynamic field shaped by economic, political, and ethical considerations. The historical evolution of welfare systems, as documented by these authors, underscores their role in promoting equity and resilience.

In 2020, Robert R. Longley in his prominent webpage article "All About Truman's Fair Deal" analyzes Truman's efforts to expand federal welfare, while Charles I. Schottland in his report "Social Security Amendments of 1956" details Eisenhower's institutionalization of disability insurance. Elisabeth Hinton critiques Johnson's Great Society in her journal article

“A War Within Our Own Boundaries”, noting its centralized welfare model that excluded FBOs, and Mary Daly and Richard V. Burkhauser in their report "The Supplemental Security Income Program" evaluate Nixon’s federalization of aid for vulnerable groups. In addition, Luz Baez in his thesis paper “The Neoliberalization of Social Welfare Programs” scrutinizes Clinton’s PRWORA, which marked a shift toward work-based welfare and introduced Charitable Choice to formally involve FBOs. These studies illustrate the tension between federal oversight and local innovation, setting the stage for Bush’s FBCI. The chapter reveals how welfare policies evolved in response to ideological and practical challenges.

The Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) under George W. Bush, marked a transformative policy that formalized partnerships between government and religious organizations. Stanley W. Carlson-Thies in his report about "Faith-Based Initiative 2.0: The Bush Faith-Based and Community Initiative" outlines the initiative’s legal and administrative frameworks, while Lauren Frances Turek in his journal article "Religious Rhetoric and the Evolution of George W. Bush's Political Philosophy" traces its ideological roots to Bush’s Texas governorship. Moreover, Avis C. Vidal in his report "Faith-Based Organizations in Community Development" examines FBOs’ operational roles, and Shawn Bauldry and Wendy McClanahan in their notable work "Ready4Work" highlight their effectiveness in reducing recidivism. Critics like Jill Goldenziel in his critical report "Administratively Quirky, Constitutionally Murky" question its church-state implications, and Robert J. Wineburg et al. in the "Leveling the Playing Field: Epitomizing Devolution Through Faith-Based Organizations" report, critique its favoritism toward certain religious groups. The "PEPFAR" report demonstrates the initiative’s global impact through faith-based HIV/AIDS programs. Together, these works reveal the FBCI’s dual legacy: expanding service delivery while sparking debates over religious neutrality and accountability. The literature underscores the initiative’s significance in redefining welfare governance.

This research paper is divided into three chapters. The first, under the title “Social Welfare in Theory Application and History” introduces core concepts and theoretical approaches to social welfare, presenting the historical and religious frameworks that have shaped public service in the United States. It examines how education, healthcare, housing, and income support have been implemented through both governmental and religious channels. "The Evolution of US Social Welfare Policies before George W. Bush and the Role of Faith-Based Organizations (1945–2000)" is the title of the second chapter offers a chronological analysis of presidential welfare policies from the Truman administration through to the end of the Clinton era. It traces how different administrations addressed poverty and social need, while noting the consistent but informal presence of religious organizations. The third chapter, which is titled " Faith-Based and Community Initiative under the George W. Bush Administration" . is devoted to the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, detailing its legal basis, funding structures, and major programs. It also explores the criticisms the initiative faced and evaluates its broader significance in the context of public-religious collaboration.

This study adopts a qualitative, historically grounded methodology. Rather than relying on fieldwork or interviews, the research is based on documentary analysis. It draws from a range of primary sources such as presidential speeches, executive orders, public policy documents, and legislative texts. Reports and evaluations from government institutions and major faith-based organizations further supplement the analysis. In addition, scholarly contributions from fields such as social welfare, political science, and religious studies are used to contextualize findings. This approach enables the study to trace developments over time, evaluate patterns, and offer critical insight into how policy and ideology shape the interface between religion and the state.

The question of religion's legitimacy in shaping public policy remains a pressing theme in American political and scholarly discourse. As faith-based organizations became more formally integrated into the welfare system during the early 2000s, researchers have sought to understand whether this convergence represents a true partnership or a blurring of institutional boundaries. The Faith-Based and Community Initiative under President George W. Bush has become a focal point for such inquiry, raising ongoing questions about the influence of spiritual missions on public funding, legal frameworks, and service delivery. While some view this collaboration as a pragmatic response to unmet social needs, others see it as a challenge to constitutional principles. The debate surrounding the proper role of religious organizations in democratic governance remains unresolved, and thus invites continued scholarly attention.

Chapter One

Social Welfare in Theory, Application, and History

Social welfare in the United States is a system of organized policies and practices aimed at addressing poverty, inequality, and social needs while promoting collective well-being. The concept of social welfare is first defined, followed by an exploration of how it functions using various supportive mechanisms within society to strengthen individuals and communities. The discussion then moves to major theoretical perspectives that connect religion and social welfare, showing how faith has influenced welfare practices and ideas over time, also to the historical development of social welfare, showing its progression from early charitable practices to structured systems shaped by societal changes. In addition to, the presentation goes further to highlight key movements that contributed to the growth of welfare, emphasizing their role in advocating for organized support within communities. Finally, it goes further to provide the necessary background for understanding social welfare in the American context.

1.1. Scholarly Definitions of Social Welfare

Significant academics have defined the concept of social welfare in a variety of ways, each highlighting distinct aspects of its purpose, application, and implementation. The definition provided by Richard M. Titmuss, a prominent British social researcher and one of the founders of the academic discipline of social policy, emphasizes the state's role in satisfying social demands. Titmuss defines social welfare as "government action undertaken for a number of political reasons to provide a variety of needs (material and social), in particular those that the market will not and cannot provide for specific designated portions of the population" (qtd. in Rengasamy 4). According to his view, social welfare is essentially a state function rather than a private or market initiative. Also, Titmuss highlights that its political goal is to achieve economic stability, political legitimacy, and social unity. He also underlines

that the government must prioritize some needs, such poverty reduction, healthcare, and education. In addition, he frames welfare as a tool for social justice and equality by concentrating on particular vulnerable populations, such as older people, those with disabilities, and the poor (5).

Expanding on this understanding, Ralph Dolgoff an American expert and educator in the field of social work and social welfare policy, sees social welfare as more than just financial assistance, in which he describes it as "all social interventions which seek to enhance or maintain the social functioning of human beings" (qtd. in Rengasamy 4). He also argued that welfare is a dynamic and continuous process that combines services like healthcare, education, and job support with both prevention and restoration goals in order to enhance overall well-being. For him, social welfare is an ongoing system of assistance that is beneficial for the whole community, not only those facing hard living conditions (4).

Complementing these perspectives, Walter A. Friedländer, a well-known social worker, author, and educator who made a significant contribution the growth of social welfare and social work education, offering a comprehensive definition that incorporates both individual and community well-being. He describes social welfare as "a structured system of institutions and social services aimed at assisting individuals and societies to attain proper standards of health and life, as well as interpersonal and social relationships that will enable them to reach their full potential and coexist with the demands of their families and the community"(qtd. in Percic 101). Friedländer's approach places a strong emphasis on emotional, social, and personal development besides of material support, focusing on helping people in integrating into their families and communities in order to foster individual growth and general societal well-being (Dickinson 96).

1.2. Mechanisms of Social Welfare

A strong social welfare system is built upon a foundation of interconnected pillars that collectively aim to promote individual and societal well-being. These key components include public health services, quality education, affordable housing assistance, social security, and various forms of social insurance, all of which work in tandem to reduce poverty and inequality. By addressing the diverse needs of the population, such a system not only fosters social cohesion but also contributes to long-term economic stability and resilience.

Firstly, public health serves as both a scientific and social initiative aimed at preventing illness, extending life expectancy, and improving well-being through organized community efforts. It functions not merely as a response to disease but as a proactive system designed to enhance the social conditions that support health. One of its foundational roles is improving environmental sanitation by ensuring access to clean water, proper waste disposal, and safe living conditions, which reduces exposure to disease and supports healthier communities (Winslow 23). Education is central to this vision, with public health initiatives teaching personal hygiene and preventive practices to empower people and promote collective responsibility for health (25). These efforts are supported by medical and nursing services that prioritize early detection and prevention, ensuring more equitable and efficient healthcare access (30). Ultimately, public health shapes both policy and infrastructure as a mechanism of social welfare, linking individual well-being to broader goals of economic and social justice.

A related area of social welfare is public education. It ensures that everyone, regardless of their socioeconomic background, has free and equitable access to education. It gives people the skills they need for economic participation and public engagement. Higher lifetime incomes, less dependence on government assistance programs, and lower crime rates are all associated with higher levels of education (Mitra 5-6). Education has been used to minimize imprisonment rates and maximize economic contributions through employment and taxes in

countries such as Pennsylvania (7). By encouraging healthier lifestyle choices and well-informed decision-making, education also promotes public health (8). Public education thus acts as a cornerstone of social welfare, fostering not just personal growth but also a wide range of social and economic advantages that empower communities and lower long-term public expenses.

Alongside education, housing assistance programs encompass a wide range of government efforts aimed at enhancing residential access and stability. These include financial aid for house purchases, rental subsidies, and publicly managed housing projects (Baker et al. 1). These programs acknowledge that stable housing serves as the basis for greater life improvements, going beyond basic shelter to enhance physical health, economic stability, and overall quality of life, in which they generally benefit disadvantaged communities facing serious economic constraints and tough living conditions (1). The design of these services reflects an understanding that fixing housing affordability issues can motivate in other life domains (3).

The United States, for instance, provides low-income households with two primary forms of housing assistance. First, government-owned apartments known as “public housing” where rent is determined by income, often 30% of a family's earnings. Second, the “Section 8 program” provides rental vouchers for private apartment, with the government covering a part of the rent (Verma et al.33). However, when the income of people in these programs increases, the rent increases as well, which may restrict certain participants from accepting higher-paying jobs (20). To sum up, housing assistance programs are crucial for assisting disadvantaged groups, but in order to truly empower recipients, these services must balance between immediate support and benefits that promote long-term economic development and self-reliance.

Social Security further fortifies the welfare system through protecting people against a variety of financial risks, including old age, disability, unemployment, and the loss of a family provider. It includes payroll taxes sponsor initiatives like the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) and Disability Insurance (DI) Trust Funds, which provide eligible people and their families retirement income and assistance to those who are unable to work because of medical conditions ("Social Security..." 191). Social Security is a fundamental human right that supports the idea that people should be protected when they are unemployed, illness, disabled, elderly, lose their spouse, or in any other circumstance when they are unable to earn an income (Yi 58). Beyond financial assistance, social security contributes significantly to both economic resilience and social equity by providing coverage for health-related issues, maternity, job injuries, unemployment, physical incapacity, aging, and the death of a household's primary income provider (59), as well as supporting consistent income and enhancing social cohesion (Thompson 5). As an integral part of broader social policy, social security influences changes in welfare systems, societal structures, and social connections, making it crucial to long-term economic stability and social welfare progress (Yi 60).

Additionally, social insurance aims to reduce the risk of financial problems, assist people by replacing some or all of their income when faced with challenging circumstances such as illness, job loss, or inability to work, and reduce the need for governmental assistance. Plus, it preserves economic stability by securing a basic income through a combination of government assistance, insurance systems, and voluntary contributions from organizations and individuals. Expanding coverage is also viewed as a key strategy for increasing national competitiveness in the global market (International Labor Organization 1). The USA government programs including Social Security, Medicare, and Unemployment Insurance give benefits supported by taxes and other charges with eligibility based on earnings and time worked ("Social Security..." 191). These five elements combined form an essential

framework for a strong, comprehensive, and inclusive welfare system, when they properly integrated; they serve as the foundation for ensuring that individuals and communities have access to the assistance, resources, and opportunities they require to live secure and dignified lives.

1.3. Theories of Social Welfare

Social welfare theories examine how social policies support social and economic well-being, with different viewpoints providing distinct insights into the purposes and the progress of the concept. First, religious ethics and charity theory emphasizes moral obligations and altruism rooted in religious teachings. Second, liberation theology is another theory that emphasizes social justice and the preferential option for the poor. Third, religious pluralism and welfare state development theory looks at how various religious traditions and interfaith dynamics affect the development and structure of welfare states. These three important approaches that are based on religious and ethical thought provide an extensive framework for comprehending the relationship between religion, morality, and societal welfare.

1.3.1. Religious Ethics and Charity Theory

According to religious ethics and charity theory, social welfare is a sacred obligation rooted in spiritual principles and people's actions are driven by both practical and spiritual benefits, as well as by the fear of divine retribution. In order to ensure compliance and motivate charitable giving, Abrahamic religions like Islam enforces charity through mandatory Zakat, requiring all Muslims to give a portion of their wealth to help the poor, with divine penalties for those who refuse to contribute (Ergener 9). However for Christianity, the early Christian communities demonstrated how faith can assist a community by effectively prioritizing the welfare of the whole, and making sure that no one was in need, through

sharing their possessions like houses and lands to ensure the sanctity of charity (17). Religious ethics and practices enhance social welfare by reminding people of God's teachings, which push them to assist those in need and establish long-term support systems. Furthermore, religious charity in areas such as education, health, and poverty relief lead to a happier, more stable society that benefits both givers and recipients (13).

Religious ethics and charity theory consider social welfare as an ethical imperative linked to compassion, fairness, and community well-being, and charitable deeds and caring for the poor as spiritual mandates reflecting moral responsibility for others (Dobrin 7). Ethical standards guide resource sharing, care for the weak, and putting beliefs and values into practice (10). While the moral aim of caring for others is shared across traditions, some enforce strict rules to attain it, while others use flexible, virtue-based techniques to achieve the same ethical goals (12). In addition, both Christianity and Islam condemn corruption emphasizing justice and equitable governance as part of God's will. In this way, religious ethics provide a strong foundation for social welfare by linking faith to tangible societal advantages (Pallangyo et al. 228-299).

1.3.2. Liberation Theology Theory

Liberation theology is a radical Christian movement that reinterprets faith as a call to fight systemic oppression, emphasizing action and prioritizing the poor as a sacred way for God's blessing and grace (de Rooij and Burity 2). Marxist ideas profoundly influenced this theory, particularly its critique of class struggle and economic oppression. Drawing from Marxist thought, Gustavo Gutiérrez and other liberation theologians framed society as divided into oppressors (the wealthy elite and capitalist systems) and oppressed (the impoverished masses), arguing that true Christianity requires active resistance to exploitative structures (Vegel 4). This perspective reinterpreted biblical teachings through a Marxist lens, for example seeing the Exodus narrative that tells how God liberated the Israelites from slavery in

Egypt, guiding them to freedom and a promised land, as a revolutionary model for political liberation rather than only spiritual deliverance (4). So, it shows that faith should lead to real change in world, especially for people who are suffering.

Also, the influence extended to economic critiques which liberation theology condemned capitalist ownership of production as unfair, coinciding with Marxist proposals for systematic reformation (Veget 5). However, critics like Cardinal Ratzinger argued that this approach distorted Christian doctrine by reducing salvation to a materialist struggle, blurring the line between faith and Marxist ideology (6). José Miranda, a key figure in the movement, even asserted that Christians have a moral responsibility to support communism, illustrating the depth of Marxist integration into theological discourse (6). While liberation theology sought to address real injustices, its reliance on Marxist theory sparked debates over whether it upheld the spiritual mission of Christianity or subsumed it into a political agenda.

Traditional charity and liberation theology have different opinions on social welfare. It claims that unjust political and economic structures that keep people struggling are the real causes of poverty and oppression rather than personal failings (Muñoz-Guzmán 4). This approach places a strong emphasis on "conscientization", which is defined as the process of making oppressed populations critically aware of their oppression, agency, and collective ability to create change (3). In this view, true social welfare must involve empowering the poor to challenge and transform the systems that oppress them.

According to this theory, social welfare is liberation, where human rights and equity are goals that cannot be negotiable (Muñoz-Guzmán 7). It stresses that true welfare requires the dismantling of oppressive systems and the prioritization of human rights as divine imperatives (5). Although Church authorities opposed the movement's political activism, it has an enormous influence on campaigns and movements around the world that address various forms of systemic oppression by advocating for tangible social transformation (de Rooij and

Burity 4). In this sense, liberation theology redefines social welfare as a moral and spiritual struggle for justice and equality.

The theological reinterpretation and overt Marxist influence of liberation theology have drawn a lot of criticism. Critics claim that it consistently supports the poor, which contradicts with biblical commands for fair and equal justice (Vegel 6). By presenting the Eucharist and Exodus as symbols of revolution, the movement moves the emphasis from spiritual salvation to political liberation (4). It also divides society between oppressors and oppressed by adopting a concept of class conflict (5), and even advocates communism as a Christian obligation. Adding to, they argue that redefining Church identity based on political affiliation rather than religion politicizes the Church, leading to internal division and alienating believers who reject revolutionary ideas. Also, while liberation theology's empathy for the poor is acknowledged, it subsequently distorts Christian doctrine, selectively uses Scripture, and weakens the Church's spiritual mission, contributing to division within the Church (6-7).

1.3.3. Religious Pluralism and Welfare State Development Theory

Religious pluralism has a subtle impact on welfare state development, notably on political cohesiveness, institutional architecture, and the moral foundation of social policies. In contexts where no single religious tradition dominates, faith-based actors' power to influence welfare agendas is frequently diffused, weakening the creation of strong confessional parties or unified policy demands (Pavolini et al. 7). This expansion may restrict religion's ability to serve as a catalyst for universal welfare programs, particularly when divergent belief systems prevent agreement on essential social values like as solidarity, redistribution, or family ethics (8). As a result, religious diversity can lead to a more fragmented and less ideologically driven approach to welfare policy.

In addition, the plurality of religions also reshapes the function of religious organizations, which, rather than being heavily embedded in government structures, either compete in quasi-

markets or serve as supplemental providers in fragmented welfare systems (Pavolini et al. 9). This environment challenges traditional corporatist approaches, which relied on religious homogeneity to maintain stable ties between church and state (10). Moreover, the very core of religious pluralism says that all religions are equally genuine and worthy of space, creates complex tensions for religious actors committed to exclusivist theological claims (Asadu et al. 6). In these cases, pluralism may unintentionally pressures religious groups to soften doctrinal stances, resulting in identity dilution and diminished moral authority in the public domain (7). Ultimately, religious pluralism transforms not only the structure of welfare delivery but also the role and the influence of religion in shaping public life.

Thus, although pluralism encourages tolerance and coexistence, it also presents structural and ideological restrictions on the establishment and longevity of inclusive welfare states. While religious pluralism promotes tolerance, it is also criticized for undermining theological clarity and strengthening syncretism, which can lead to reduced religious commitment and doctrinal doubt. The acceptance of all faiths as equally legitimate is viewed as a threat to the uniqueness of any faith, specifically Christianity, and raises the problem of how truth claims can be compared or evaluated in the absence of objective standards (Asadu et al. 3). Though the pluralistic paradigm is inclusive in theory, it frequently leads to religious ambivalence and degradation of core values, potentially reducing religion to a nominal social identity (6). Furthermore, in pluralistic societies where the state fails to properly manage religious diversity, religious conflict can grow, indicating a functional gap in what Welfare State Development Theory may presume is a neutral or supportive governmental apparatus (6). The authors argue that without equitable state treatment and protection for religious communities, pluralism becomes a source of instability rather than harmony (7).

1.4. Historical development of Social Welfare

The historical development of social welfare reflects changing societal needs, political ideologies, and economic conditions across different regions and eras. As challenges emerged and public expectations grew, governments around the world adapted their approaches to better support citizens and respond to shifting global realities.

The early twentieth century marked a critical phase in the evolution of social welfare systems as industrial societies faced growing demands for structured public support. During this period, many European countries began integrating local health insurance funds and mutual aid societies into national systems, laying the groundwork for modern welfare states (Lengwiler and Stüdli 2). The German model of social insurance, initiated by Bismarck, served as a blueprint internationally, influencing both corporatist and hybrid systems throughout Europe until the mid-20th century (5). These developments reflected not just national policies but also transnational knowledge sharing and institutional borrowing across borders. This shows that social welfare reform was as much about political will as it was about adapting to global economic and social shifts. Overall, the period from 1900 to 1945 represents the foundation of the modern welfare state, shaped by both internal pressures and international cooperation.

The post-World War II era marked a foundational era in the development of the modern welfare state. It was shaped by the aftermath of World War II and a widespread belief in the government's duty to secure the well-being of its citizens. A landmark wartime report proposed eliminating poverty, disease, ignorance, squalor, and idleness, which led to sweeping reforms such as the creation of a tax-funded, universal healthcare system, a national insurance scheme covering unemployment, sickness, and pensions, and a comprehensive network of means-tested assistance programs (Glennerster 3-4). Education reform established free secondary schooling, while public housing projects rapidly expanded to address post-war shortages. Services were centrally administered and widely accessible, with every citizen's

contributions and entitlements managed through a single administrative system that marked an unprecedented level of organization and reach.

For example, in Britain, a single office located in Newcastle was responsible for handling all national social security payments and records, showcasing the scale and centralization of the system. The economic thinking of the time emphasized state responsibility for maintaining full employment and stabilizing the economy, further justifying expansive social programs. Strong labor movements also influenced policy, pressing for rights and protections and backing the expansion of welfare provisions (Glennerster 4). Even skeptical political factions largely accepted these developments due to their popularity. By the mid-1970s, social welfare programs absorbed more than a fifth of national income, supported by steady economic growth and demographic shifts such as the rise in dual-income households (5). Yet, mounting inflation, energy crises, and resistance to higher taxes began to undermine consensus, marking a transition from expansion to austerity and reevaluation of the welfare model (6).

The late 20th century saw huge welfare changes during the 1980s and 1990s as a result of economic restrictions and shifting political ideologies. European countries faced particular difficulties as traditional welfare models that were based on secure employment and government assistance became strained due to globalization and rising unemployment (Albuquerque de Castro 3-4). Countries reacted differently; Germany shifted toward pension privatization and flexible labor markets (Avlijas et al.14), whereas Nordic states like Sweden maintained a strong social welfare system through significant reforms such as reduced unemployment benefits and introduced remarkable ones in education (school vouchers) and telecommunications (Bergh 24). Southern European countries, like Greece, first increased welfare programs in the 1980s, but later struggled with fragmented systems (Maloutas and Papatheodorou 5–6) and budget cuts due to European Union monetary restrictions (8-9).

These changes reflected a broader continental trend of making welfare systems more economically sustainable while preserving core social protections.

Furthermore, Latin America adopted the "Washington Consensus" model, privatizing pensions and healthcare systems, which frequently left informal workers without proper coverage (Albuquerque de Castro 3-4). By the 1990s, some Latin American countries had implemented conditional cash transfer programs as a market-friendly approach to poverty alleviation, but they did not fully compensate for the retreat of state welfare (9-10). These reforms resulted in leaner, more employment-focused systems, but also expanded inequality and left vulnerable groups at danger.

Meanwhile, East Asia generated a distinct approach that combined governmental and private welfare solutions. For example, Japan addressed its aging population through comprehensive reforms like the Gold Plan (1989–1999) for elderly care (Jacobs 15) and the Angel Plan (1994) for childcare support (16). South Korea established its National Pension Program (1988) (17) and achieved universal healthcare coverage (1989) (18-19). Taiwan also implemented national health insurance in 1995 (21). Singapore and Hong Kong relied more heavily on market mechanisms, especially Singapore's mandatory Central Provident Fund savings system and MediShield healthcare program (27). Basically, unlike Western nations that reduced state involvement, East Asian countries maintained significant government roles in welfare while creatively incorporating private sector and family support structures to address demographic and economic challenges.

As these diverse paths developed, the 21st century has brought unprecedented new pressures to welfare systems, including automation, aging populations, and falling traditional employment models (Hajighasemi et al 2). These complex challenges demand that global social welfare systems simultaneously address three crucial imperatives: reducing growing inequality, responding to rapid demographic changes, and sustaining economic

competitiveness (4). In response, the complex nature of these challenges requires transformative policy interventions that go beyond traditional welfare system designs (7).

The Nordic model, illustrated by Sweden and Denmark, shows how strong universal welfare states can maintain high social protections while fostering innovation (Hajighasemi et al 4). Sweden's comprehensive system, which is often accused of discouraging entrepreneurial risk-taking, yet it provides the safety nets that allow for long-term innovation (8). For Denmark, it developed a distinctive flexicurity approach that combines three crucial elements: flexible hiring and firing policies for employers, with large unemployment benefits, and extensive state-funded retraining programs, in order to create a balance between labor market adaptability and worker security (6). Both countries prioritize active labor market policies and significant public investment in research and development, while their universal welfare systems reduce inequality more effectively than liberal models (4-5).

1.5. Movements of Social Welfare

The evolution of social welfare systems has been deeply shaped by a range of movements that emerged in response to the social and economic crises of industrialization, especially the labor movement and the Charity Organization Movement, each showing different visions of how society should address poverty, inequality, and the well-being of its citizens.

1.5.1. The Labor Movement

With the growth and evolution of labor movements, which arose in reaction to capitalist nations' industrialization and growing reliance on wage work as the primary means of survival, labor movements began to advocate for governmental measures that would shield workers from market swings as unemployment became a structural problem in contemporary economies (Olofsson 11). Early welfare initiatives in the late 19th century, such as Bismarck's social insurance programs, were intended not only to alleviate workers' hardships, but also to

counteract the growing influence of socialist and labor movements by positioning the state as a force for integration into society (12-13). Labor unions evolved from oppositional grassroots groups to institutional players established in policymaking frameworks throughout time, particularly in Western Europe (15).

Besides, their impact was most successful when they were formally incorporated into state institutions, resulting in more expanding and universal welfare systems (Boreham et al. 32). This dynamic is especially visible in the Nordic nations, where coordinated union strength and social democratic administration have combined to establish strong welfare regimes (Olofsson 17). The Nordic experience demonstrates how union integration into political frameworks fostered comprehensive welfare policies. The resulting welfare regimes in these countries reflect a strategic alignment between labor movements and state institutions (19).

On the other hand, the United States adopted a different path. Although the American labor movement exhibited early signs of radicalism and cross-class solidarity, as evidenced by the rise of the Knights of Labor, it was eventually constrained by corporate actors' extraordinary power and a fragmented political system that limited union influence on national welfare policy (Fantasia et al. 2). In theory, the relationship between labor and welfare may be understood through the notion of "decommodification," which implies that welfare institutions minimize workers' reliance on the market for fundamental necessities. Labor movements have historically served as vehicles for this shift, fighting for safeguards such as unemployment insurance, pensions, and healthcare (Boreham et al. 35). Consequently, the growth of social welfare is not only a narrative of government generosity but also a reflection of organized labor's ability to change public policy in reaction to the structural weaknesses of capitalist economies (Fantasia et al. 3).

1.5.2. The Charity Organization Movement

The Charity Organization Movement (COM), as depicted in the Charity Organization Society's (COS) historical record, marks an important early stage in the evolution of modern social welfare systems. The COS, founded in 1869 in London, intended to establish order and organization to the chaotic and overlapping charity activities tackling poverty in the 19th century. Rather than giving direct assistance, it prioritized moral inspection and personal transformation, setting the framework for bureaucratic casework and distinguishing between the "deserving" and "undeserving" destitute. This dichotomy mirrored the Victorian-era notion that poverty was caused by individual shortcomings, such as idleness, intemperance, or bad home management, instead of structural or economic factors (Dorey 197).

As a result, the COS regarded its goal as encouraging responsible conduct and family economics, frequently through home visits and guidance from middle-class women to working-class families. These trips were based on the premise that poverty might be reduced via personal transformation and the adoption of middle-class values. It had a long-term impact on the evolution of social work as a profession, notably its techniques of customized case inquiry, moral judgment, and collaboration with other agencies. Although this method helped to professionalize social welfare, it has since been attacked for its moralistic and classist implications. Its emphasis on discriminating between the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor promoted damaging stereotypes and shifted responsibility onto people rather than tackling deeper social and economic disparities (Dorey 197).

The movement's dependence on middle-class women to educate working-class families generated a power imbalance, since those providing advice frequently lacked direct knowledge of poverty. In addition, their approaches prioritized human transformation above monetary help, indicating an unwillingness to address systemic inequities. While modern welfare systems have turned toward addressing systemic reasons of poverty, such as unemployment, poor wages, and discrimination, the COM's legacy lives on in current

discussions over conditional welfare and personal responsibility. The movement's emphasis on organized aid distribution, judgment-based support, and behavioral reform established a core paradigm for how nations approach and manage social welfare nowadays (Dorey 198).

By examining social welfare's scholarly definitions, working mechanisms, theoretical frameworks, and historical development, chapter one has established a fundamental grasp of the field. According to the viewpoints of academics like Titmuss, Dolgoff, and Friedländer, social welfare is a community-based and state-led system that strives to promote social justice, equity, and well-being. The mechanisms covered—from housing, social security, and insurance to public health and education—emphasize how comprehensive welfare systems promote resilience on an individual and group level. The moral, political, and cultural foundations of welfare ideologies and their impact on policy are illustrated by theoretical frameworks such as religious ethics and charity, liberation theology, and religious pluralism. The chapter also examines how welfare evolved from religious charity to contemporary governmental structures, influenced by labor unions and the Charity Organization Movement. When taken as a whole, these components highlight how social welfare is a vibrant and diverse organization that is intricately linked to cultural norms, historical developments, and the ongoing fight for social justice and human dignity.

Chapter Two

The Evolution of US Social Welfare Policies before G.W. Bush and the Role of Faith-Based Organizations (1945–2000)

Social welfare policies in the United States experienced significant developments between 1945 and 2000 as the nation worked to address poverty and social needs amid changing political and economic conditions. The progression of welfare policies under administrations from Truman to Clinton is examined, showing how each responded to social challenges while balancing federal and state responsibilities. In addition to, the transition toward welfare reform in the 1990s is highlighted, reflecting shifts in approaches to poverty and government assistance. Also, the role of faith-based organizations within the welfare landscape during this period is explored, focusing on their contributions and limitations as they navigated the boundaries between religious service and government programs. Finally, the study provides the necessary background for understanding the context in which faith-based involvement in social welfare expanded, setting the stage for developments under the Bush administration.

2.1. Harry S. Truman and the Fair Deal Policy

Harry S. Truman, the 33rd president of the United States, assumed office in 1945 following Franklin D. Roosevelt's death and led the nation through the end of World War II and its postwar challenges (Onion et al.). In his 1949 State of the Union address, Truman introduced the Fair Deal, a comprehensive policy aimed at expanding the New Deal's legacy by promoting social welfare, economic security, and civil rights. The Fair Deal sought to address postwar inflation, improve labor rights, and ensure equitable economic opportunities through measures such as raising the minimum wage, expanding Social Security, and implementing national health insurance ("Truman Proposes 'Fair Deal'"). Truman's vision reflected his belief that the federal government should actively reduce inequality and enhance

living standards, particularly for working-class Americans. However, his ambitious proposals faced significant opposition from conservative lawmakers and interest groups, such as the American Medical Association, which resisted national health coverage (Longley). Despite these challenges, Truman's Fair Deal set the stage for future debates on federal responsibility in social welfare.

2.1.1. The Fair Deal Policy

The Fair Deal targeted key areas, including healthcare, housing, education, and civil rights, though its success was mixed due to political resistance. Truman advocated for a national health insurance system, but Congress rejected it, despite his efforts to frame it as essential for public well-being (Longley). One of the policy's major achievements was the Housing Act of 1949, which funded the construction of over 800,000 low-income housing units, marking a significant federal commitment to public housing ("Truman Proposes 'Fair Deal'"). Additionally, Truman successfully raised the federal minimum wage from 40 to 75 cents per hour and expanded Social Security coverage to more workers. However, other proposals, such as federal aid to education and anti-lynching laws, were blocked by a conservative coalition in Congress, limiting the Fair Deal's immediate impact. Despite these setbacks, Truman used executive action to desegregate the military, demonstrating his commitment to civil rights even without legislative support (Longley). While not all goals were realized, the Fair Deal proved that gradual progress was possible even in a divided political climate.

The Fair Deal laid the groundwork for future social welfare programs and reinforced the federal government's role in addressing inequality, although it did not achieve all its goals. Truman's push for national health insurance, though unsuccessful, inspired later debates that led to Medicare in the 1960s (Longley). Similarly, his housing and wage policies provided a model for subsequent economic reforms, emphasizing the importance of federal intervention

in social welfare (Onion et al.). While conservative opposition prevented comprehensive change, the Fair Deal's incremental successes, such as the minimum wage increase and public housing initiatives, proved that progress was possible even in a divided political climate. Moreover, Truman's vision helped shape the modern welfare state and influenced later policies aimed at reducing economic and racial disparities ("Truman Proposes 'Fair Deal'"). His determination to advance social justice, left a lasting legacy in the ongoing struggle for a fairer society, paving the way for future generations of reform.

2.1.2. The Faith Based Organizations Limitation during Truman's Presidency

During Harry Truman's presidency, faith-based organizations were not formally integrated into federal welfare programs, but they played a significant indirect role in supporting government-led social initiatives. Truman frequently emphasized the moral and civic importance of religious institutions in addressing the nation's social challenges. For example, in a 1946 address to the Federal Council of Churches, he appealed to churches to assist with the housing crisis for returning veterans, recognizing their unique position to foster community support and care ("Truman, Address..."). While not structurally embedded into welfare programs, churches were viewed as key allies in sustaining the nation's moral fabric and communal well-being.

Truman's administration also promoted religious engagement in national service and community efforts, particularly in the military. He institutionalized religious engagement through the creation of the President's Committee on Religion and Welfare in the Armed Forces by Executive Order 10013, aiming to strengthen the moral and spiritual welfare of servicemen by promoting cooperation between civilian religious groups and the military (Truman, Executive Order 10013). Furthermore, in a 1950 letter, he encouraged local communities to involve churches and synagogues in supporting the well-being of military personnel and their families, highlighting the essential role of religious institutions in

community development (“Truman, Letter to the Chairman...”). These efforts illustrate how Truman’s administration enabled the voluntary participation of FBOs in national welfare goals, establishing a collaborative but informal partnership that foreshadowed later institutional models.

2.2. Dwight D. Eisenhower and the "Social Security Amendments of 1956"

Dwight D. Eisenhower is a distinguished military leader and the 34th US president, played a pivotal role in shaping American social policy during the Cold War era. Known for his pragmatic leadership, Eisenhower championed policies that balanced economic growth with social welfare, including the expansion of Social Security (Pach). His administration focused on practical solutions that laid the ground for significant reforms that would last for decades. One of his most important contributions was the "Social Security Amendments of 1956", which was signed into law on August 1, 1956, which significantly modernized the US social welfare system ("Statement by the President..."). Later, this system becomes a fundamental pillar of American social welfare, demonstrating Eisenhower's ability to translate military organizational skills into effective civilian governance.

2.2.1. The Social Security Disability Insurance Policy

The Social Security Amendments of 1956 represented a major expansion of the US social safety net. Beyond creating SSDI, these amendments made several other important changes to Social Security. They lowered the retirement age for women from 65 to 62 (with actuarially reduced benefits), extended coverage to an additional 900,000 workers including farm operators and self-employed professionals (Schottland 2), and improved benefits for widows by allowing them to claim at age 62 (4). The amendments also increased federal matching funds for state public assistance programs and strengthened child welfare services,

demonstrating Eisenhower's commitment to comprehensive social reform ("Statement by the President..."). Together, these measures significantly strengthened America's social welfare structure.

These amendments introduced the "Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)" program, which refers to a landmark reform that provided financial security for disabled workers. This program was enacted under "Title II of the Social Security Act", marked a major shift in US social welfare by offering monthly benefits to workers aged 50–65 who were deemed permanently and totally disabled (Schottland 2). To qualify, applicants had to meet strict criteria, including a 20-quarter work history within the last 40 quarters -workers needed to have worked about 5 years out of the last 10-and a six-month waiting period to exclude temporary disabilities (3). Also, they were funded by a 0.5% payroll tax increase, to ensure long-term sustainability of the program through a dedicated "Disability Insurance Trust Fund"(5). Additionally, the SSDI program also helped disabled adult children of qualified workers and encouraged vocational rehabilitation, which required most of recipients to participate in rehabilitation services (job training programs) to help them return to work, unless they had medical or religious reasons that enable them to participate (3). The careful design ensures SSDI's effectiveness as a long-term social insurance program.

The impact of SSDI was profound, providing financial stability for millions of Americans. By 2014, the program supported approximately 11 million beneficiaries, including disabled workers and their dependents (Morton 2). However, challenges such as rising enrollment and trust fund solvency concerns prompted ongoing debates about the program's future (17). Despite these issues, Eisenhower's foresight in establishing SSDI reinforced the role of social insurance in protecting vulnerable citizens, leaving a lasting legacy in US policy.

2.2.2. The Limitation of Faith Based Organizations during Eisenhower's Presidency

During Dwight D. Eisenhower's presidency (1953–1961), Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) played a prominent role in social welfare within a limited-government framework. Eisenhower favored voluntary action and moral renewal over expanding federal welfare programs, a stance that aligned with the belief that poverty often stemmed from personal failings rather than structural issues. Social policy analysts like Wilbur Cohen distinguished between “situational” and “fundamental” poverty, reinforcing the idea that religious groups were well-suited to address the moral roots of poverty. FBOs such as the Family Service of Northern Delaware adopted this approach, offering aid only to those showing personal initiative, a policy consistent with both religious values and the administration's ideology (Wanner 10). This convergence of moral reform and limited-government thinking positioned FBOs as effective and ideologically favored agents of welfare during the 1950s.

Demographic shifts and institutional change further reshaped FBO involvement during this era. As mainline Protestant congregations moved to the suburbs, Catholic and African-American Protestant churches took on greater responsibility for urban service provision (Hall 33). Catholic FBOs began professionalizing their services, anticipating greater government involvement in welfare and healthcare. Even before Medicaid's creation, Catholic hospitals required staff to hold formal credentials, encouraging religious sisters to pursue advanced education (26). Meanwhile, Black churches not only offered social support but also served as centers for civic activism, playing key roles in events like the Montgomery Bus Boycott (19). These developments expanded the influence of religious organizations, transforming them into both social service providers and agents of political and professional change.

Although Eisenhower avoided formal church-state partnerships, his administration laid the groundwork for future collaboration between government and religious organizations. His promotion of public religiosity, such as the inclusion of “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance, reinforced the legitimacy of FBOs in public life. By the 1980s, faith-based groups

were receiving government contracts for services like group home care, a development rooted in patterns established during the 1950s (Hall 25). These trends marked a turning point, positioning FBOs as both spiritual and social actors in the evolving welfare landscape.

2.3. President Lyndon B. Johnson Great Society Policy

The expansion of social welfare under the Great Society brought significant changes to how assistance was delivered and who was involved in shaping it. Lyndon B. Johnson, the 36th President of the United States, assumed office following the assassination of John F. Kennedy. He was known for his exceptional legislative abilities; Johnson played a central role in enacting a wide-ranging domestic agenda called the “Great Society”. This initiative aimed to eliminate poverty and racial injustice through policies that transformed American social welfare, especially in education, healthcare, and civil rights. His presidency was a turning point in US history, redefining the federal government's role in promoting social equity (“Lyndon B. Johnson...”).

2.3.1. The Great Society Policy

President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society policies, particularly Medicare and Medicaid (1965), prohibited federal oversight of medicine. These programs quickly evolved into porevolutionized American social welfare by expanding federal responsibility for healthcare access. Though designed to avoid interference in clinical practice, the Medicare statute explicitly powerful regulatory forces. Cost overruns and rising expenditures led to quality control measures like Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs), which grew from 1970's era Professional Standards Review Organizations to monitor hospital care. As a result, the Great Society redefined the scope of federal involvement in social welfare, laying a lasting foundation for future healthcare and anti-poverty programs in the United States. Similarly, the 1972 End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) program, Medicare's first disease-specific coverage,

demonstrated how payment policies directly influenced treatment protocols, such as restrictions on erythropoietin dosing for dialysis patients (DeWalt et al. 79). Johnson's vision of a "Great Society," articulated in his 1964 University of Michigan speech, promised to end poverty and racial injustice through initiatives like urban renewal and education reform yet the documents reveal how healthcare policy became its most enduring legacy, despite departing from its original limited-government framework.

The tension between Johnson's inspirational rhetoric and policy reality is further illustrated by Medicaid's state-level flexibility and Medicare's unintended consequences. While Johnson called for "creative federalism" to empower local solutions, Medicaid's decentralization led to uneven innovation, such as North Carolina's Community Care Networks for coordinated care (DeWalt et al. 85). Meanwhile, Medicare's role in funding graduate medical education (GME) inadvertently constrained physician training after 1997 budget caps (84), contradicting Johnson's promise of expanded opportunity. Though the documents emphasize healthcare over other Great Society programs like Head Start, they collectively demonstrate how these policies reshaped American governance transforming limited safety nets into instruments of federal influence, far beyond Johnson's original vision.

Complementing Medicare and Medicaid, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (EOA) marked another major pillar of Johnson's Great Society by targeting the structural roots of poverty through education, job training, and community action. As outlined in the official statute, the EOA created the Office of Economic Opportunity to administer programs such as Job Corps, Head Start, and Community Action Programs (CAPs), all designed to empower citizens rather than merely provide relief (United States Congress 508). This legislative framework embodied Johnson's belief that the fight against poverty required the elimination of the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty. Notably, the CAPs encouraged local decision-making, reflecting Johnson's "creative federalism" ideal, but also sowed the seeds

for intergovernmental tensions when federal standards clashed with state control (“United States...” 286). These programs, while initially expansive, often struggled with inconsistent implementation and political pushback, which limited their transformative potential. Still, the EOA stands as a testament to the Great Society’s ambition: to institutionalize opportunity itself as a form of welfare, aiming to address inequality at its roots rather than through redistribution alone.

2.3.2. The FBO'S Activism during Johnson's Presidency Era

Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society policies significantly expanded the federal government’s role in social welfare, yet these programs were built upon a framework that largely excluded faith-based organizations (FBOs) from formal involvement. Welfare initiatives such as Medicare, Medicaid, and the Economic Opportunity Act were administered through secular federal agencies, reinforcing a centralized, bureaucratic model of service delivery (Hinton 105). At the same time, the expansion of social programs was accompanied by increased surveillance and law enforcement efforts in marginalized urban areas, which limited the influence of community-based and religious actors in shaping or implementing policy (106). Legal and constitutional norms during this period further restricted the role of FBOs. Prevailing interpretations of the Establishment Clause prohibited federal funds from going to organizations deemed extensively sectarian, unless they removed all religious content, symbols, and instruction from their services. As a result, religious institutions were systematically sidelined from federal welfare partnerships, despite their longstanding community roles (Lupu and Tuttle 206-207). The Great Society’s commitment to secularism, combined with legal caution, created a model of welfare provision that excluded faith-based actors a limitation that would not be seriously reconsidered until decades later.

2.4. Richard Nixon the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Program

The creation and evolution of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program reflect broader trends in American welfare policy during the late 20th century. Richard Nixon, the 37th president of the United States, was a complex and controversial leader known for his foreign policy achievements and the Watergate scandal that led to his resignation ("Richard Nixon..."). During his presidency from 1969 to 1974, Richard Nixon oversaw the creation of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program in 1972. The program replaced varied state-run welfare systems with a unified federal initiative to provide consistent income support to the elderly, blind, and disabled across the nation ("Department of Health..." 589-590).

2.4.1. The Supplemental Security Income Program

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, while originally designed to provide essential economic support to vulnerable Americans, has become increasingly outdated in its structure and impact. Established in 1972 to replace a fragmented system of state-level programs, SSI aimed to provide uniform federal assistance to elderly, blind, and disabled individuals with limited income and resources (Daly and Burkhauser 80–81). However, the asset limit—set at \$2,000 for individuals and \$3,000 for couples—has not been updated since 1989, losing value due to inflation (82). The program also still excludes only \$20 of general income and \$65 of earned income, unchanged since its inception, which discourages recipients from working or saving due to benefit reductions of 50 cents per dollar earned beyond these amounts (83-84). These outdated rules disproportionately harm individuals with disabilities, who already face systemic employment barriers and risk losing vital support from small income increases (84). Without modernization, SSI risks failing the very populations it was established to protect in today's evolving economic landscape.

The 2012 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program presents a detailed evaluation of the program's administrative and operational performance, revealing significant challenges in ensuring accurate and timely

payments. Despite SSI's goal of providing stable income support to low-income elderly, blind, and disabled individuals, the report highlights persistent inefficiencies that compromise both fiscal responsibility and service delivery. In fiscal year 2010 alone, the program issued an estimated \$4.8 billion in improper payments, which is about 9.1 percent of total SSI outlays, this is largely due to unreported or misreported income, changes in living arrangements, and delays in updating eligibility status. The Social Security Administration (SSA), which administers SSI, faces difficulties verifying information quickly and accurately due to a heavy reliance on self-reporting and limited data-sharing capabilities. The GAO emphasizes that "long-standing weaknesses in oversight" contribute to overpayments and inconsistent enforcement of eligibility criteria ("US Government Accountability..." 6-7). The report calls for stronger internal controls, expanded use of automated data matching, and improved interagency coordination to better detect and prevent errors. These administrative shortcomings not only lead to significant financial losses but also undermine the program's ability to provide reliable support to its intended beneficiaries.

2.4.2. The FBO's Activism during Richard Nixon Era of Presidency

Although the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, introduced under Richard Nixon in 1972, represented a major step in federalizing social assistance for vulnerable populations, it also reflected the dominant welfare model of the era one that structurally marginalize faith-based organizations (FBOs). During this period, public welfare delivery became increasingly centralized and professionalized, favoring large, secular nonprofit providers while sidelining smaller religious organizations. One analysis notes that many grassroots FBOs, despite offering secular services, were routinely excluded from contracting opportunities with the government, primarily because they did not conform to the secular frameworks expected by federal agencies. These exclusions were not always grounded in

constitutional requirements, but rather stemmed from bureaucratic habits and concerns over perceived favoritism or constitutional violation (Rushton 13-14).

Additionally, the broader welfare state model that governed the delivery of programs like SSI relied on institutional norms that separated religious service from formal welfare channels. As another study points out, faith-based actors were often pushed into informal or auxiliary roles, as government policy deliberately constructed boundaries to limit their participation in the welfare apparatus (Tadros 4). These limits were especially pronounced prior to reforms in the 1990s, which only later sought to recognize the role of FBOs in welfare partnerships (6). As such, Nixon's SSI program, while socially expansive, operated within a system that institutionalized the exclusion of FBOs from federally supported service delivery, privileging administrative neutrality over pluralistic inclusion.

2.5. President Gerald Ford the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Policy

During Gerald Ford's administration, welfare policy took a new direction, emphasizing work incentives and tax-based assistance over traditional service delivery models. Gerald Ford became the 38th president of the United States in 1974 after Richard Nixon resigned due to the Watergate scandal. As president, he faced the challenge of restoring trust in government and managing a struggling economy with inflation and unemployment (Greene). As part of his economic policy, Ford signed the Tax Reduction Act of 1975, which included the creation of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a refundable tax credit designed to assist low-income working families (United States Congress 30–31). Its goal was to incentivize work over welfare dependency by supplementing wages through the tax system (Margot L. Crandall-Hollick 1–2). The EITC was revolutionary in structure: rather than offering traditional welfare assistance, it rewarded employment by providing refundable tax credits that could exceed the amount of taxes owed, thereby directly boosting household income.

The policy operates through a phased credit structure: as a worker's income increases, the EITC benefit rises, reaches a plateau, and then gradually phases out, creating a smooth incentive to work more without a sharp benefit cliff. Over time, the EITC evolved from a modest tax relief tool into one of the largest anti-poverty programs in the United States. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, expansions of the EITC during the 1990s significantly increased employment among single mothers and reduced poverty among working families (Margot L. Crandall-Hollick 2-3). The program's design encourages labor force participation while avoiding the stigma associated with direct welfare (4). Nonetheless, scholars have also noted some challenges, including overpayments due to income misreporting and complex eligibility rules (5-6). Despite these issues, both reports highlight the EITC's enduring legacy as a bipartisan-supported, work-based welfare alternative that continues to shape modern tax and social policy.

While the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) was a landmark initiative under President Gerald Ford to support low-income working families through refundable tax relief, its structural design effectively excluded faith-based organizations from participating in its implementation. Unlike direct service welfare programs that historically engage with local or religious nonprofits, the EITC operates entirely through the federal tax system, providing individual cash benefits without institutional intermediaries. This model, as Ferris explains, inherently marginalizes FBOs, which have traditionally functioned as community-based service providers rather than administrative conduits for financial redistribution (Ferris 317). The lack of a service infrastructure in EITC administration meant that organizations deeply rooted in local and religious communities, which are entities often best positioned to connect with underserved populations, had no formal role. Furthermore, the EITC's emphasis on individual work as a condition for eligibility reinforces a privatized and neoliberal approach to welfare that overlooks collective or community-based responses to poverty. As the American

lawyer Conor Colasurdo argued, this framework not only limited the program's effectiveness in reaching the poorest households but also excluded organizations capable of providing holistic, non-monetary forms of support (Colasurdo 7). Thus, while the EITC succeeded in aiding some working families, its design reflected a broader policy trend that sidelined FBOs by privileging tax-based assistance over community-based service partnerships.

2.6. Jimmy Carter and the US Department of Education as a Social Welfare

Jimmy Carter, or James Earl Carter, is the 39th President of the United States, was a dedicated advocate for human rights, social justice, and government efficiency. During his presidency, he prioritized racial equality, streamlined federal programs, and expanded social welfare initiatives in housing, education, and public health. His commitment to these issues extended beyond his presidency through his work with The Carter Center, where he continued to promote global humanitarian efforts (“Official Jimmy Carter Biography”). Carter's leadership was defined by his belief in fairness and his efforts to improve opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

2.6.1. The U.S. Department of Education

Among Carter's key domestic achievements was the establishment of the US Department of Education (ED) in 1980. The department was created through the Department of Education Organization Act (DEOA), signed on October 17, 1979, during a public ceremony attended by over two hundred government officials (Scisco 101). This policy fulfilled a campaign promise to the National Education Association (NEA), which had strongly supported his election (25). Moreover, the new department consolidated education programs from various agencies, including the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, with the goal of elevating education as a national priority (Burke and Butcher 3). Through this major reorganization of federal education policy, Carter fulfilled a key campaign promise while establishing new tools to combat educational inequality.

The ED's creation achieved several landmark successes that reshaped American education. By consolidating 152 previously fragmented federal education programs into a single cabinet-level agency, Carter's policy eliminated bureaucratic redundancies and created a unified system for education governance (Hogue and Skinner 5-6). The new department made significant strides in civil rights enforcement through its Office for Civil Rights (OCR), which strongly applied anti-discrimination laws to protect minority students and women. Special education services, particularly for students with disabilities, experienced unprecedented growth under the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), while bilingual programs received substantial federal support for the first time (Hogue and Skinner 8-9). The policy also established the National Institute of Education to advance pedagogical research and nearly doubled federal education spending during its first five years, with targeted increases for Title I programs serving disadvantaged students (Burke and Butcher 6-7). Furthermore, it created innovative channels for community engagement through local advisory councils, democratizing education policy decisions (Hogue and Skinner 7). These efforts positioned the ED as the cornerstone of federal efforts to advance educational equality.

The establishment of the US Department of Education faced criticism from multiple factions. Within the Carter administration, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Joseph Califano and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) opposed the department's creation, arguing it would reduce efficiency and weaken coordination of programs for children. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a democrat from New York condemned the effort as a politically driven decision made behind closed doors, reflecting concern over its political motivations and lack of transparent policymaking. Labor organizations like the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) also objected, with the AFT forming the Committee against a Separate Department of Education to counter the perceived dominance of the National

Education Association (NEA) (Burke and Butcher 4-5). Religious conservatives further criticized the department as federal overreach into local education autonomy (Scisco 82). Critics later argued that the ED failed to improve student outcomes while imposing bureaucratic burdens on states and schools (Burke and Butcher 12). These critiques underscored tensions between federal surveillance and local governance in education.

Despite these criticisms, the department's institutional legacy remains profound. The ED fundamentally redefined the federal government's role in education by establishing durable frameworks for equity, such as civil rights enforcement and support for vulnerable populations. Carter's vision transformed education into a national priority, embedding protections for marginalized groups into federal policy and aligning it with broader social justice goals. This structural shift stands as one of Carter's most enduring domestic achievements, exemplifying his commitment to pragmatic policy innovation (Hogue and Skinner 10). Carter's pragmatic policy innovation ensured that education remained central to America's social welfare agenda long after his presidency.

2.7. Bill Clinton's Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of Social Welfare

Bill Clinton, the 42nd president of the United States, served from 1993 to 2001 and played a significant role in shaping modern American domestic policy. His presidency focused on key issues such as economic growth, international trade, education, and healthcare. Clinton also worked toward achieving peace in global regions like the Middle East; though his time in office was marked by controversy during his second term (Preston 221). Clinton's wide-ranging agenda illustrates how his leadership sought to balance internal development with global diplomacy. Overall, Clinton's presidency combined economic and social reforms with significant political and international engagement.

2.7.1. Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act

One of the most important domestic policies under Clinton was the signing of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) on August 22, 1996. This law replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a program designed to reduce welfare dependency and encourage self-sufficiency through work (Baez 8). The change marked a dramatic break from previous federal welfare policy and emphasized accountability. PRWORA represented a significant shift in US social welfare policy, giving states more flexibility in program design while requiring them to meet federal work and time limit mandates. Granting states more control reflected a broader move toward decentralization in American governance. These changes reflected a new philosophy in welfare governance that emphasized employment over long-term public assistance (15). Such an approach marked a turning point in welfare policy by prioritizing labor market participation as the main tool for combating poverty and reducing federal guarantees of assistance.

The impact of PRWORA was seen in the sharp decline in welfare caseloads and the rise of state-level variation in policy implementation. Some states, like Arkansas, adopted strict lifetime limits, while others, like New York and California, maintained longer support for children even after ending benefits for adults (Baez 10). Different approaches among states revealed how local politics and priorities shaped welfare outcomes. Nationwide, the number of welfare recipients fell drastically, with cities like New York seeing an 80% reduction between 1996 and 2011. Such statistics show a rapid and far-reaching effect of the reforms on public assistance enrollment. However, the drop in TANF participation was accompanied by increased reliance on programs such as food stamps, suggesting that while fewer people were on welfare, many still needed government support (9). Rising food stamp use implies that families often shifted from one form of aid to another rather than achieving complete

independence, which indicates that while PRWORA succeeded in lowering welfare rolls, it did not eliminate the economic vulnerability of many families.

Another evaluation of PRWORA highlights the policy's work requirements, fixed funding structure, and its impact on low-income families. The TANF program imposed a five-year lifetime limit on benefits and required states to meet rising work participation rates, starting at 25% and increasing to 50% by 2002 (Loprest et al. 164–165). These strict federal targets pushed states to prioritize immediate employment for recipients. While these measures led to higher employment rates among low-income women and expanded access to child care subsidies through the Child Care Development Fund, many recipients remained in low-wage jobs without benefits. Also, the fixed block grant system also created funding challenges during economic downturns, raising concerns about the program's ability to support families in times of need (163–164). This inflexibility exposed a structural flaw in the program during periods of rising unemployment. So, although PRWORA encouraged work and reduced welfare use, it left structural issues unresolved for the working poor.

2.7.2. Charitable Choice Policy and Religious Organizations' Integration in Social Welfare

Charitable Choice, introduced through the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) during the Clinton administration on the 22nd August, marked a major turning point in the relationship between religion and federal social welfare policy. Though initially passed as a political compromise rather than from strong ideological conviction, Charitable Choice laid the legal and philosophical foundation for allowing religious organizations to receive federal funding without surrendering their religious identity. This provision sought to reverse the historical marginalization of faith-based groups in the delivery of social services and to diversify the types of organizations eligible to partner with the government (Wanner 36).

Charitable Choice was grounded in four foundational principles: first, that faith-based providers must meet the same performance standards as secular ones; second, that they were permitted to retain religious symbols, scriptures, and practices in federally funded spaces; third, that they could hire staff based on religious criteria as protected by Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act; and fourth, that participation in religious activities must be voluntary, with secular alternatives provided to beneficiaries who object. Ultimately, these principles reshaped the boundaries between church and state by legitimizing the participation of faith-based organizations in federally funded welfare programs while safeguarding both religious freedom and public accountability (Wannern 37).

Despite its foundational principles, the implementation of Charitable Choice encountered several practical challenges. The policy's implementation varied across states due to ambiguous legislative language and insufficient federal guidance. Also, Many faith-based organizations (FBOs), particularly smaller ones, lacked the the administrative capacity to manage public contracts, including challenges with financial management, performance tracking, and regulatory compliance. In addition to, the assumption that FBOs had been systematically excluded from public funding was not supported by empirical evidence at the time, which calls into question one of the core justifications for the policy's creation (Goodman 568).

While some FBOs excelled in offering holistic and spiritually supportive services, they often struggled with administrative burdens. Moreover, there was little indication that Charitable Choice brought new resources into the social service sector, yet some states, such as Massachusetts, considered the policy redundant due to existing partnerships with religious organizations (Goodman 569). Overall, these challenges highlight the gap between the policy's intentions and its real-world outcomes, raising important questions about the

effectiveness and necessity of Charitable Choice in enhancing faith-based participation in public service delivery.

Several faith-based organizations (FBOs) were influenced by the "Charitable Choice policy" during the Clinton era, particularly those already engaged in government-funded social services. Organizations such as "Catholic Charities USA", "Jewish Vocational Services", and "The Salvation Army" expanded or maintained their roles under the new policy, benefiting from its encouragement of FBO participation in programs like TANF (Kennedy et al. 10). These groups were often well-established, professionalized nonprofits with prior experience managing public contracts. Smaller, more sectarian organizations, including storefront churches and local congregations, were also encouraged to participate but faced challenges related to administrative capacity and compliance requirements (65). Despite these limitations, Charitable Choice helped legitimize the broader inclusion of faith-based providers in public service delivery, reinforcing partnerships between religious institutions and state agencies.

Other types of faith-related organizations, including "parachurch organizations" like "Habitat for Humanity" and the "Promise Keepers", were also influenced by Charitable Choice, though many did not directly receive federal funding. These groups blend religious mission with community service and benefited from the policy's opening for religiously affiliated organizations to access public funding. Additionally, "interdenominational and ecumenical networks" played a role in facilitating collaboration between faith-based and secular providers, especially in urban areas where religious coalitions worked on poverty alleviation and community development projects aligned with welfare reform goals. Also, in cities like Boston and New Haven, "Black church organizations" played a growing role in public service delivery, forming partnerships with local governments and probation departments to address issues like crime reduction and community development (Hall

8). While not all of these organizations directly received federal funds, they were part of a broader movement toward integrating religious values into public service provision.

Critics of Charitable Choice have voiced significant concerns about the policy's broader implications. They argued that it threatened to erode fundamental principles of religious freedom, church-state separation, and the independence of faith-based organizations. One key concern raised by critics of Charitable Choice was the potential for coercive religious practices by faith-based service providers. They argued that the vulnerable populations served by religiously affiliated service providers might be subject to coercive religious practices. These individuals might lack the social power or confidence to resist subtle or overt pressures to participate in religious activities in exchange for aid, despite formal guarantees of voluntary participation (Andersen 16). This suggested a troubling risk that religious freedom could be undermined under the guise of voluntary service provision.

Another major criticism centers on the potential for government funding to promote religion, even unintentionally. Critics contend that even with safeguards, government funding for religious organizations inevitably promoted religion. Public grants helped build up these organizations' capacities across the board, and when those organizations were allowed to hire only members of their own faith, the religious mission was inherently advanced (16). This dynamic blurred the line between secular public services and religious endorsement.

A final and deeply rooted concern relates to the long-term consequences of state funding on the independence of religious institutions. Once religious groups become financially dependent on the state, they might hesitate to criticize government policies or act contrary to state expectations, thus risking a loss of moral authority and autonomy. These critics warn that even under the more relaxed regulatory structure of Charitable Choice, the delicate balance between religious freedom and government oversight may be disrupted, and the religious institutions themselves may be reshaped by political and financial incentives (Ellor

2). Ultimately, this raises fears that the prophetic voice and autonomy of religious organizations could be compromised for the sake of funding.

To conclude, this chapter explored how US presidents from 1945 to 2000 shaped social welfare policy, highlighting their varying approaches to government responsibility and the involvement of faith-based organizations (FBOs). While programs like Truman's Fair Deal and Johnson's Great Society expanded federal welfare roles, others like Clinton's PRWORA shifted focus to work incentives and decentralization. Across administrations, FBOs were often sidelined, only gaining formal recognition with Clinton's Charitable Choice. Overall, the chapter shows a gradual evolution in welfare policy marked by both expansion and reduction, as well as a delayed but significant rethinking of FBOs' roles in public service.

Chapter Three

Faith-Based and Community Initiative under the George W. Bush Administration

The Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) under President George W. Bush marked a turning point in the relationship between government and religious organizations in social welfare delivery in the United States. The origins and development of the FBCI are examined, highlighting its goals, structure, and alignment with the philosophy of "compassionate conservatism." Moreover, the operational framework of the initiative is explored, including the creation of offices, funding processes, and oversight mechanisms. Also, the domestic and international impacts of the FBCI are considered, alongside the legal and constitutional concerns raised by its implementation (The Establishment Clause). Finally, the challenges and criticisms faced by the initiative, providing a clear understanding of how the Bush administration's policies redefined the role of faith-based organizations within American social welfare.

3.1. Definition of Faith-Based Organizations

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) are religiously motivated entities that play a vital role in community development and social service delivery. These groups include congregations, denominational affiliates, and independent nonprofits, all of which are driven by a commitment to assist marginalized populations through services like food aid, shelter, and housing programs (Vidal 8). While some FBOs limit their efforts to short-term humanitarian work, others engage in long-term development through mechanisms like community development corporations (20). Despite their impact, many FBOs face resource constraints that limit their involvement in sustainable development projects. Nevertheless, they remain key actors in serving both spiritual and practical needs within underserved communities.

The identity and structure of FBOs are often rooted in religious congregations or denominational, sectarian networks, with varying degrees of formal affiliation. Their branding

and visual identity_ such as its name, logo, or visual symbols_ may reflect religious origins, whether formally or ideologically, though some adopt more neutral imagery to broaden public appeal, which is depending on how the organization wishes to be perceived (Mohd. Noor and Md Nawawi 17–18). Many FBO benefit from support provided by their parent religious organizations, such as volunteers, funding, and physical space (Vidal 13). Over time, certain FBOs have evolved to resemble secular Non-Governmental Organizations, although their missions remain anchored in faith-based values (9). This hybrid nature allows FBOs to balance professionalized service delivery with spiritual commitment.

FBOs operate along a range of religious expression, ranging from purely humanitarian to explicitly faith-driven missions. Clarke a British associate professor in politics, philosophy, and international relations, categorizes them as passive, active, persuasive, or exclusive, depending on how prominently religion influences their activities (Mohd. Noor and Md Nawawi 20–21). Their role extends beyond direct aid to include housing, economic development, and advocacy for justice, often leveraging community trust and moral authority (Vidal 4). In the development sector, FBOs are both collaborators and counterparts to secular NGOs, contributing distinct ethical perspectives and community ties (Mohd. Noor and Md Nawawi 27). This dual identity enhances their ability to address complex social issues while remaining grounded in faith-based motivations.

3.2. The Creation and Evolution of Faith-Based and Community Initiative under the George W. Bush Presidency

George W. Bush's engagement with faith-based policy began during his tenure as governor of Texas in the mid-1990s, marking a shift in how religious organizations were integrated into social service delivery. At first, Bush kept his personal faith separate from his public image, focusing on conservative issues like education and welfare reform, and avoiding religious rhetoric in campaigns (Turek 980). However, his perspective changed as he

became influenced by thinkers like the American journalist and author Marvin Olasky, who advocated for spiritually centered solutions to social issues. In 1996, Bush's administration released the "Faith in Action" report, which emphasized the transformative power of religion in addressing poverty and social decay (986). This ideological shift became foundational to the faith-based agenda he would later advance nationally.

In 1997, Bush turned this vision into legislative action by championing bills in Texas that allowed faith-based organizations (FBOs) to receive public funding without having to compromise their religious identity. These included House Bills 21, 2481, 2482, and Senate Concurrent Resolution 44, all of which aimed to protect religious liberty while encouraging FBOs to participate in state-run welfare programs. At the same time, Bush began adopting explicitly religious language in public speeches, framing societal problems as moral crises best addressed by faith-centered institutions. He argued that government could not foster love or transformation, only faith could accomplish that (Turek 987-988). These state-level efforts signaled the beginning of Bush's broader commitment to compassionate conservatism.

The groundwork for Bush's national faith-based initiative was laid by the Charitable Choice provision of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act under President Clinton. This policy opened federal funding opportunities to religious organizations, enabling them to deliver social services without abandoning their faith-based missions and religious identity (Poole and Wineburg 3). Recognizing the potential of this approach, Bush expanded it after becoming president by issuing Executive Order 13199 on January 29, 2001, establishing the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (8). This office represented a formal recognition of religious organizations as legitimate partners in addressing national welfare concerns, moving beyond the earlier model of simple financial support. It was a critical step in embedding faith-based service into federal social policy.

The creation and evolution of the FBCI during Bush's presidency reflected a significant transformation of the relationship between government and civil society. Bush proposed a system where the state would serve not just as a funder but as a collaborator with faith-based and community organizations, empowering them to reach underserved populations with both material aid and moral guidance (Carlson-Thies 12). The FBCI was institutionalized across key federal departments such as Health and Human Services, Education, and Justice, embedding faith-based engagement into multiple layers of governance. Legal reforms like the 2002 Equal Protection Executive Order ensured that FBOs could retain their religious character while participating in federally funded programs (29). Despite ongoing controversy and legal limitations, the FBCI marked a lasting transformation in American welfare policy, aligning religious compassion with public administration.

3.3. The Framework of the Bush White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

President George W. Bush's Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) was developed to break down the key barriers that had prevented faith-based and small community groups from competing fairly for federal funding. These barriers included difficult application procedures, limited awareness of funding opportunities, and grant requirements that tended to favor large, well-established organizations. To solve these problems, the Bush administration set up a dedicated White House office and also launched specialized centers in ten federal agencies: the Departments of Justice, Agriculture, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Education, Commerce, and Veterans Affairs, along with the Agency for International Development and the Small Business Administration ("Guidance to Faith-Based..." 3). The purpose of these offices was to make sure that smaller, local, and faith-based service providers had the same opportunity to compete for government resources as larger or secular organizations. President Bush intended this initiative to create an open

public space where faith-based and community groups could fully contribute to federally supported social services without being excluded based on their religious identity ("President's Faith-Based...").

To make federal resources more accessible, these agency centers, together with the White House office, worked to simplify the grant process by improving communication and removing unnecessary bureaucratic steps. They offered training sessions, provided technical support, and adjusted certain regulations to encourage smaller groups to apply for funding ("Guidance to Faith-Based..." 3). These improvements helped local and faith-based organizations better understand and participate in the grant system, offering them a fairer chance to deliver community services. The Bush administration believed that these smaller, often overlooked organizations could make a meaningful impact if given equal access to federal support ("President's Faith-Based...").

Following these changes, faith-based and community organizations were allowed to apply for funding either directly from federal agencies or through state and local governments that managed federally provided funds. The applications were assessed using neutral, effectiveness-based criteria to ensure that the evaluation focused solely on the potential success of the programs, regardless of whether the applicants were religious or not ("President's Faith-Based..."). The White House office and the centers within the federal agencies did not directly handle or distribute funds themselves; instead, they focused on helping organizations understand how to apply and successfully compete for funding within the established government systems ("About FBCI"). This approach was intended to make federal funding opportunities more inclusive, allowing a wide range of organizations to participate based on their ability to deliver quality services ("Guidance to Faith-Based..." 3).

3.4. The Federal Grant Distribution and Supervision Operation for Faith-Based Organizations

The federal government played a key role in funding and overseeing faith-based organizations during the Bush administration. Through a structured process, money was allocated by Congress, distributed by federal and local agencies, and monitored to ensure proper use. Faith-based groups were able to apply for grants, compete fairly, and provide community services while following federal guidelines that protected the separation of church and state.

3.4.1. Congress Allocation Process of Funds to Agencies

The federal funding process begins when Congress allocates money to federal agencies based on the President's proposed budget. President George W. Bush used this process to support the work of faith-based and community organizations by creating the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI) in 2001 ("Executive Order 13199..."). Bush also set up centers in five key agencies including, Health and Human Services, Education, Housing, Labor, and Justice, to help these groups access federal funds. These agency centers were responsible for reviewing grant opportunities and removing barriers that made it hard for faith-based organizations to compete fairly ("Executive Order 13198...").

Through this structure, federal money was directed toward important community programs such as housing, education, healthcare, and job training. The agency centers worked closely with the White House OFBCI to ensure faith-based and small community organizations were included in the funding process. They also identified policies that unfairly blocked smaller groups from applying ("Unlevel Playing Field..."). Overall, this system connected the national budget to local service providers, making federal funds more accessible to community organizations.

3.4.2. Agencies Distribution Path of Grants on the Faith-Based Organizations

Once agencies received funding, they used two main methods to distribute grants to organizations. The first method was discretionary (competitive) grants, where small organizations could apply directly to federal agencies like HHS or the Department of Labor. The second method was formula or block grants, which were large sums of money given to state and local governments that then shared the funds with local organizations (“Unlevel Playing Field...”). These two paths allowed faith-based and community groups to receive funding either directly from the federal government or through local governments.

The OFBCI also helped agencies remove complicated rules that made it hard for smaller groups to apply. They encouraged agencies to offer smaller grants and partner with local nonprofits to help reach more people. The OFBCI supported voucher programs, giving people the freedom to choose services from faith-based providers if they wanted (The White House 29-30). Together, these changes made it easier for small organizations to get funding and serve their communities. This system opened more doors for faith-based groups while still following federal guidelines.

3.4.3. Application and Competition of FBO over Federal Grants

Small organizations, including local churches and community centers, had to follow a public and open grant application process. Federal agencies posted Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) that explained how to apply and what the grant required (“Executive Order 13199...”). The OFBCI published a key report called *Unlevel Playing Field* in August 2001, which showed that small organizations faced systemic obstacles with the paper work and lack of information accessibility (“Unlevel Playing Field...”). So, it responded by offering training, simpler forms, and extra support to help these groups compete (“Unlevel Playing Field...”). These steps helped ensure that small organizations could fully participate.

All applicants had to show clear project plans, budgets, and goals to receive funding. Faith-based organizations were allowed to keep their religious identity, but they were not

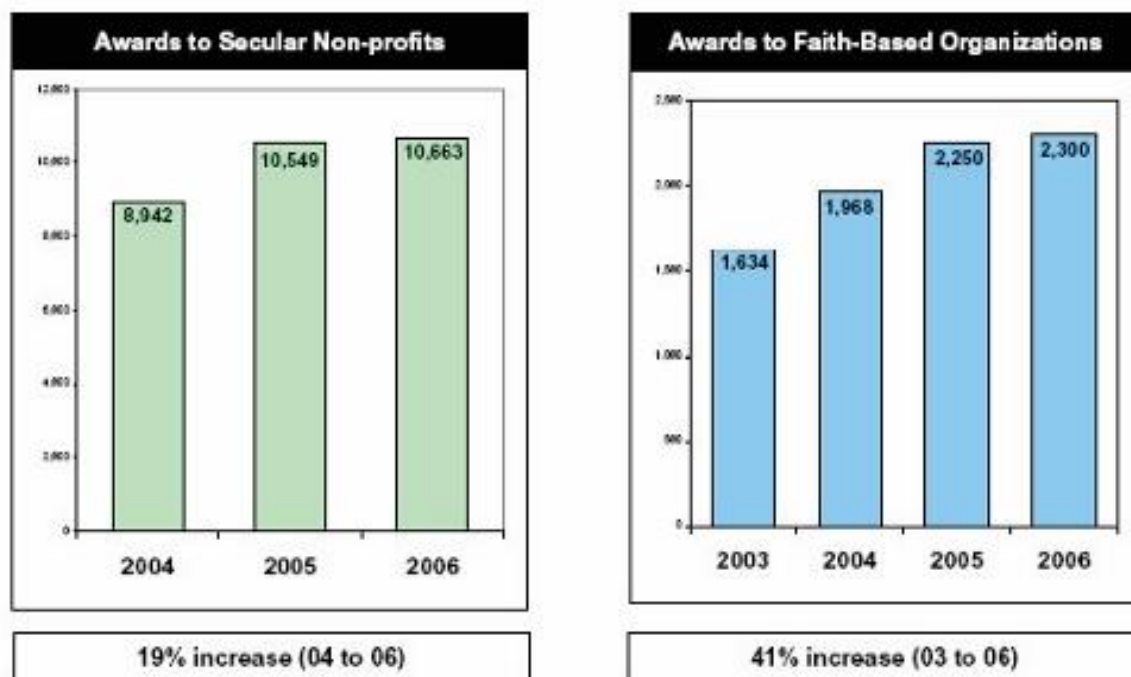
allowed to use federal funds for worship or religious activities (“About FBCI”). Services paid for by federal grants had to be separate from any religious programs, and participation in religious parts had to be voluntary (The White House 29-30). The Bush administration made sure that all groups, whether religious or not, were treated fairly in the competition process (“Executive Order 13199...”). These rules protected both the fairness of the competition and the freedom of religious expression.

3.4.4. The Supervision Mechanism and Control Process of FBO's Funding Usage

Supervision was an important part of the Bush administration’s faith-based funding system to ensure that money was used correctly. The White House OFBCI and agency centers regularly checked that faith-based organizations did not use federal funds for religious teaching, worship, or proselytizing (The White House 29-30). Agencies required groups to report how they used the money and to show that their services were open to everyone (“About FBCI”). Faith-based groups were allowed to keep their religious identity, but the government carefully monitored how federal funds were spent (“Executive Order 13199...”). This process protected the separation of church and state while supporting community work.

Finally, faith-based and community organizations that received federal grants had to regularly send financial reports and performance updates to their funding agencies. This helped the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI) and agency centers keep track of how the money was used, who was being served, and how many grants were given out. By 2006, reports showed that faith-based groups had received over \$2.18 billion in federal funding, which was more than three times what they had received before (“Measurement Matters”). This system made sure that while more groups had access to funding, they still had to follow the law and use the money properly.

Fig.1. History Awards to Faith-Based and Secular Non-Profits across Five Agencies

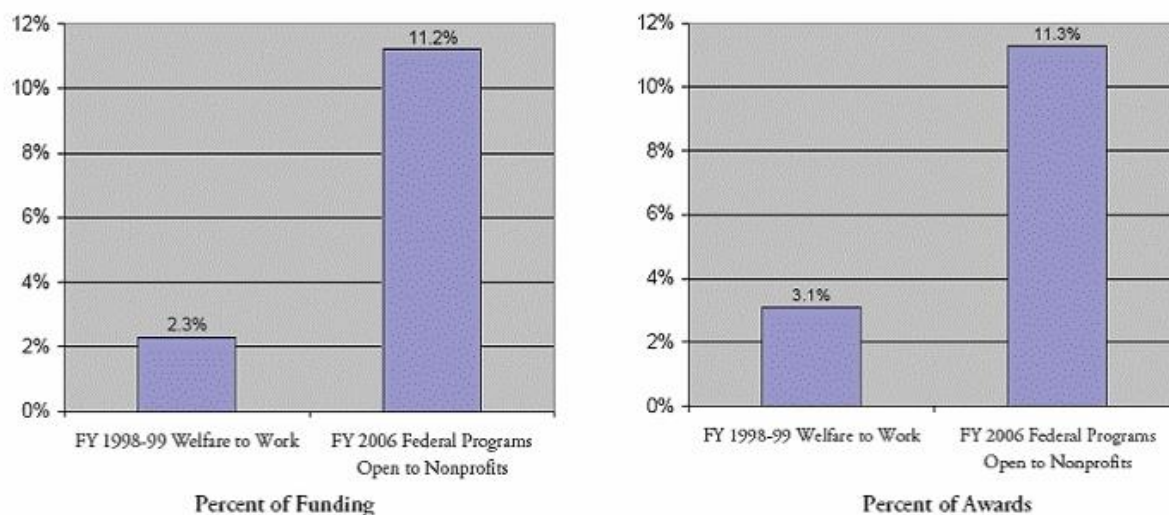


Source: The White House. *The Quiet Revolution*. Feb. 2008, georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/government/fbci/The-Quiet-Revolution.pdf.

Figure 1 represents the change in competitive grant awards from five federal agencies between FY 2003 and FY 2006. During this period, faith-based organizations saw a (41%) increase in the number of awards received, rising from 1,634 to 2,300. Secular nonprofits also experienced growth, with a (19%) increase in awards from FY 2004 to FY 2006, though data was not available for secular groups in FY 2003. These trends illustrate a notable expansion in access for faith-based organizations and reflect a broader federal shift toward engaging both religious and secular nonprofits as key partners in addressing social problems.

Expanding on this development, additional data reveals the growth of both funding and awards during Bush's presidency in FY 2006, is identified in figure 2.

Fig.2. Funding and Awards Won by Faith-Based Organizations



Source: The White House. *The Quiet Revolution*. Feb. 2008, georgewbush
whitehouse.archives.gov/government/fbc/The-Quiet-Revolution.pdf.

Figure 2 illustrates the significant increase in federal competitive awards granted to faith-based organizations by FY 2006. That year, these organizations received approximately \$2.18 billion in funding, accounting for 11.2% of all competitive grant dollars distributed. They were also awarded 3,125 grants, representing 11.3% of the total number of awards. This marks an observable rise compared to their earlier participation under the Welfare-to-Work program, where faith-based groups received only 2.3% of the available funding. The data reflect a clear shift toward greater inclusion of faith-based organizations within the federal grant system during the Bush administration.

3.5. Assessing the Domestic and Global Effectiveness of Bush's Faith-Based and Community Programs

The Faith-Based and Community Initiative under President George W. Bush demonstrated measurable effectiveness through domestic programs designed to address critical social issues. One prominent example is Ready4Work, a reentry initiative that combined faith-based mentoring with job training and case management to reduce recidivism among formerly incarcerated individuals. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, participants in the program showed higher employment rates and significantly lower chances of rear rest than

national averages (Bauldry and McClanahan 18). Another key program, Access to Recovery (ATR), provided individuals with vouchers to choose addiction recovery services, including those offered by faith-based providers, giving clients flexibility while promoting accountability and individualized care (United States Government Accountability Office 15). These programs illustrate how FBOs could effectively deliver specialized, values-based services that met pressing community needs. Together, they reflect the initiative's capacity to integrate faith-informed support into publicly funded service systems with quantifiable success.

The initiative's effectiveness extended globally through PEPFAR the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief which mobilized faith-based organizations to provide life-saving care across sub-Saharan Africa. These groups, often embedded in the community, played a pivotal role in reducing stigma and expanding access to HIV testing, treatment, and education in areas underserved by formal health systems. The 2022 State Department report credits faith-based partners with helping save more than 25 million lives since PEPFAR's launch, largely due to their local trust and logistical capacity (PEPFAR 6). This international engagement highlights the Bush administration's recognition of FBOs as essential service partners not only in the U.S. but also in global humanitarian efforts. By leveraging their moral credibility and community presence, the initiative succeeded in delivering both practical health services and deeper cultural impact. As a result, PEPFAR stands as one of the clearest examples of how faith-based collaboration under Bush produced wide-reaching and sustainable outcomes.

3.6. The Domestic and International Impact of Faith-Based and Community Initiative during the George W. Bush Presidency

During George W. Bush's presidency, the Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) reshaped how the federal government partnered with religious organizations in social service

delivery. Faith-based offices were established in key federal agencies to help community organizations access public funding and expand their outreach (The White House 3). These offices provided training and guidance to enable smaller nonprofits to compete for federal grants (4). One major program, the Compassion Capital Fund, distributed over \$100 million to build the capacity of grassroots service providers (9). Despite progress, the Government Accountability Office noted that oversight and performance tracking still needed improvement (United States Government Accountability Office 15). Ultimately, the FBCI transformed domestic welfare policy by embedding faith-based groups into the federal social support framework.

The FBCI also had a distinct international dimension during George W. Bush's presidency, especially in humanitarian aid and global health. Faith-based organizations began collaborating with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to implement development programs focused on education, disaster relief, and basic health services (The White House 14–15). One of the most significant examples was the role of religious nonprofits in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), where they delivered HIV testing, treatment, and counseling services in dozens of countries (PEPFAR 20–21). These groups were often more trusted than governmental actors in rural or religiously conservative communities, which allowed them to reach vulnerable populations more effectively (22). Their work helped the United States achieve public health goals while promoting civil society engagement abroad. In this way, the FBCI expanded its faith-based partnership model beyond U.S. borders, embedding it into foreign aid strategies and global outreach efforts.

3.7. Challenges and Barriers of Faith-Based and Community Initiative during the George W. Bush Presidency

The Faith-Based and Community Initiative faced several problems during George W. Bush's presidency. Legal concerns about the separation of church and state made many groups unsure about joining. Smaller faith-based organizations also struggled with paperwork, reporting rules, and a lack of resources. Some people believed the program favored certain religious groups, especially conservative Christian ones. These challenges made it harder for the initiative to reach all communities fairly and limited the number of groups that could fully take part.

3.7.1. Issues with the Separation of Church and State of Faith-Based Organizations

One of the central challenges facing the Bush Faith-Based and Community Initiative was the constitutional concern over the separation of church and state. Critics argued that giving federal funds to religious organizations blurred legal boundaries and risked violating the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment (Carlson-Thies 931). To prevent this, the administration required faith-based groups to strictly separate religious practices from publicly funded services, but this requirement proved difficult to implement effectively (Koopman 346). The resulting confusion discouraged participation by many FBOs, especially those unsure how to comply without losing their religious identity (Goldenziel 371). These persistent concerns slowed the initiative's rollout and limited its impact on diverse religious communities.

Another layer of complexity was the fear that even indirect support, such as renovating facilities used for both worship and social services, might be seen as unconstitutional. Critics worried that such dual-use funding could effectively subsidize religious activities with taxpayer dollars (Goldenziel 373). Although court decisions were evolving, there was still no consistent legal standard that clearly defined the boundaries of acceptable partnerships between government and faith-based groups (Koopman 340). This ambiguity left FBOs and public agencies navigating uncertain legal ground, often erring on the side of caution to avoid

violations. As a result, constitutional concerns remained a major barrier to full engagement with the initiative.

3.7.2. Accountability and Transparency Requirements of Faith-Based Organizations

A second major challenge was that many faith-based groups lacked the administrative skills and infrastructure required to comply with federal grant regulations. Smaller FBOs struggled with tasks such as financial audits, data collection, and following anti-discrimination rules, which limited their access to funding (Koopman 353). In contrast, larger, more experienced organizations were better equipped to meet these demands, creating structural inequality within the initiative (Goldenziel 380). This discrepancy undermined the administration's goal of empowering grassroots groups that were often closest to communities in need (Carlson-Thies 927). Many smaller organizations simply lacked the capacity to compete for federal funds.

To address these disparities, the Bush administration introduced the Compassion Capital Fund, which aimed to build the capacity of under-resourced FBOs (Carlson-Thies 928). However, despite this support, many groups continued to struggle with the complex expectations of federal compliance, especially those unfamiliar with bureaucratic procedures (Koopman 354). Some were even disqualified from participation due to facility limitations, such as not having distinct spaces for secular and religious activities (Goldenziel 374). These challenges created lasting access barriers, favoring organizations already embedded in formal administrative systems. Consequently, many smaller FBOs were left behind, limiting the initiative's overall inclusiveness.

3.7.3. Faith-Based Organizations Perceived Favoritism and Capacity Gaps

The Faith-Based Initiative also suffered from widespread perceptions of favoritism toward conservative Christian groups, which raised concerns about political bias. Some critics argued that the program was designed to consolidate support from evangelical voters and shift

minority religious leaders away from the Democratic Party (Carlson-Thies 915). Although the initiative was theoretically open to all faiths, this perception alienated non-Christian and secular providers, discouraging their participation (Koopman 351). As a result, the initiative lost credibility in the eyes of many communities it aimed to serve. This perception of partisanship undermined the broader legitimacy of the effort.

In addition, many local and small-scale FBOs lacked the internal capacity to manage federal grants effectively. These organizations often had limited staffing, minimal technical expertise, and informal operational systems, which made compliance difficult (Koopman 354). Even with support mechanisms in place, such as technical assistance programs, many groups remained unprepared to meet federal expectations (Carlson-Thies 928). This gap in administrative readiness contributed to unequal participation, as more established organizations secured most of the available funding. Together, political perceptions and structural limitations reduced the initiative's diversity and effectiveness.

3.8. The Criticism of Faith based and Community Initiative during Bush's Presidency

The Faith-Based and Community Initiative under President Bush brought mixed reactions. Some leaders and organizations supported it for helping religious groups serve more people in need. Others disagreed with how it was handled, saying it was unfair, broke legal rules, or favored certain groups. There were also worries about how the money was given out and whether it truly helped smaller organizations.

3.8.1. Supporters of Faith-Based and Community Initiative Institutional, National and Local Backing during the Bush Era

The Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) received support from a wide range of institutions during George W. Bush's presidency, including actors at both the federal and state levels. Among the most proactive were state government leaders, who sought to mirror and expand Bush's federal policy through their own offices and programs. States such as Texas,

Indiana, and Michigan created faith-based and community initiative offices to reduce barriers for religious nonprofits seeking government support. These offices provided training, convened stakeholders, and helped faith-based groups apply for grants. Policymakers saw this approach as both innovative and cost-effective, blending civic partnership with public service goals (Pineda 4-5). In doing so, state officials emerged as key implementers of the FBCI's broader vision for government-community collaboration.

Another strong base of support came from large national religious nonprofits such as Catholic Charities USA, Lutheran Social Services, and Habitat for Humanity. These groups already had decades of experience delivering housing, health, and food assistance, and the FBCI gave them more visibility and access to federal resources. The initiative formalized partnerships that allowed these organizations to expand services while maintaining their faith-based missions. Government agencies, including HUD, recognized their value as trusted institutions embedded in local communities (Vidal 11-12). These partnerships showed that religious identity could coexist with federally funded, nonsectarian service delivery. In this way, national faith-based organizations served as credible and capable allies in advancing the goals of the FBCI.

On the ground level, local faith-based service providers and Bush-era policymakers were among the initiative's most passionate supporters. Organizations like Catholic Charities of Central New Mexico and Christian Community Health Fellowship used FBCI grants to expand outreach and support vulnerable populations (Hose 9). These groups emphasized holistic, morally grounded care, aligning with Bush's belief that faith-based groups offer "the best of our traditions" in serving others. Figures like Jim Towey, director of the White House Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, championed the role of smaller ministries in transforming lives through community-based interventions (7). For these supporters, FBCI was not just a funding mechanism; it was a moral statement about empowering institutions rooted in

compassion and trust. Their engagement demonstrated the deep grassroots and administrative support the initiative commanded.

3.8.2. Critics of Faith-Based and Community Initiative Voices from Within and Beyond the Bush Administration

President George W. Bush's faith-based initiative faced internal criticism from former administration officials who questioned the sincerity and effectiveness of the program. Former staffer David Kuo and policy director John DiIulio argued that key officials lacked serious commitment, turning the initiative into a political tool rather than a genuine effort to help the poor (Carlson-Thies 2). Brookings scholar Kathryn Tenpas added that the Office encountered institutional challenges that limited its effectiveness, even after attempts to broaden faith-based access (Tenpas 15). These insiders revealed that the initiative often lacked high-level support and consistent implementation. As a result, public confidence and legislative progress were significantly undermined.

The initiative also raised serious constitutional concerns, particularly about church-state separation. Former president Jimmy Carter criticized the administration's distribution of over \$2 billion in grants to religious groups, calling it a threat to America's core values (Wineburg et al. 35). Jewish group B'nai B'rith and civil rights organization "American Civil Liberties Union" expressed concern that favoring religious nonprofits might erode protections of religious neutrality in public programs (American Civil Liberties Union 4–5). Critics feared that even without direct funding of religious activities, such preferences could still support religious agendas. These concerns deepened mistrust in the initiative's intentions and legality.

Further controversy emerged around employment practices that allowed faith-based groups to hire based on religious criteria. Legal scholars Stephen Monsma and Carl Esbeck questioned whether these hiring exemptions, permitted under Charitable Choice, violated equal employment protections (Wineburg et al. 30). Senior facility Hebrew Rehabilitation

Center and Methodist agency Global Ministries argued that these practices encouraged discrimination and blurred the line between public funding and religious hiring (American Civil Liberties Union 4–5). While proponents claimed these rules protected religious liberty, critics emphasized that public money should not support exclusionary employment. This tension complicated how the initiative was implemented at both federal and local levels.

Finally, many organizations doubted whether the initiative improved services or simply redirected limited resources. Religious group Manna, Inc. and housing coalition Interfaith Center noted that federal funding remained hard to access due to bureaucratic and financial barriers, especially for small congregations (American Civil Liberties Union 5). Christian charity Operation Blessing, on the other hand, thrived under the initiative due to its political connections and infrastructure (Wineburg et al. 30). Youth agency Covenant House and Catholic Charities Honolulu warned that including more faith-based providers without increasing total funding would only reduce support for existing programs (American Civil Liberties Union 4). These perspectives suggested that the initiative often helped the well-connected more than the grassroots, limiting its broader impact.

In conclusion, the Faith-Based and Community Initiative under George W. Bush marked a significant shift in federal social policy by formally integrating religious organizations into public service delivery. While it expanded opportunities for faith-based groups and demonstrated measurable impact, the initiative also faced constitutional challenges, administrative hurdles, and ongoing debates about the role of religion in government-funded programs.

Conclusion

In the current study, the relationship between religion and social welfare in the United States has been investigated, with a particular focus on the integration of faith-based organizations into federal policy. It was important to trace the historical and theoretical foundations of social welfare and examine how religious institutions, especially Christian organizations, played a significant role in early service delivery before the expansion of the modern welfare state. This research also considered how moral conviction and civic responsibility intersected through religious traditions and how this interaction influenced public attitudes toward poverty and justice.

The study highlighted the contributions of faith-based organizations, their spiritual motivations, and the challenges they faced in operating within a secular governmental framework. Their community presence, ethical orientation, and social outreach positioned them as key actors in welfare delivery. At the same time, their involvement raised constitutional questions, especially regarding the separation of church and state. This dilemma became more pronounced with the formal introduction of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative during George W. Bush's presidency. His administration aimed to eliminate regulatory barriers and allow religious groups to compete for federal funding without compromising their spiritual identity.

The Bush administration's approach reflected a shift in welfare philosophy, which emphasized the role of civil society, community partnerships, and "compassionate conservatism." The policy opened opportunities for religious nonprofits to expand their services through public support, while also prompting public debate. The initiative was praised for increasing outreach and flexibility, yet it faced criticism for lacking transparency, favoring certain groups, and challenging constitutional boundaries. These debates continue to

shape discussions around equity, pluralism, and accountability in faith-government collaborations.

Ultimately, this research found that while faith-based initiatives expanded the scope of welfare delivery, their effectiveness and fairness remain contested. The inclusion of religious organizations in public policy is not a new phenomenon, but the formalization of their role through federal initiatives introduced both opportunities and challenges. The significance of this study lies in its ability to connect historical patterns, theoretical frameworks, and policy shifts to understand the evolving role of religion in American social life.

As the conversation surrounding welfare reform, religious inclusion, and democratic governance continues, further research is needed to assess the long-term impact of these partnerships. The topic remains relevant and complex, with no definitive conclusions, as both supporters and critics of faith-based policy raise important questions about justice, neutrality, and institutional responsibility.

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