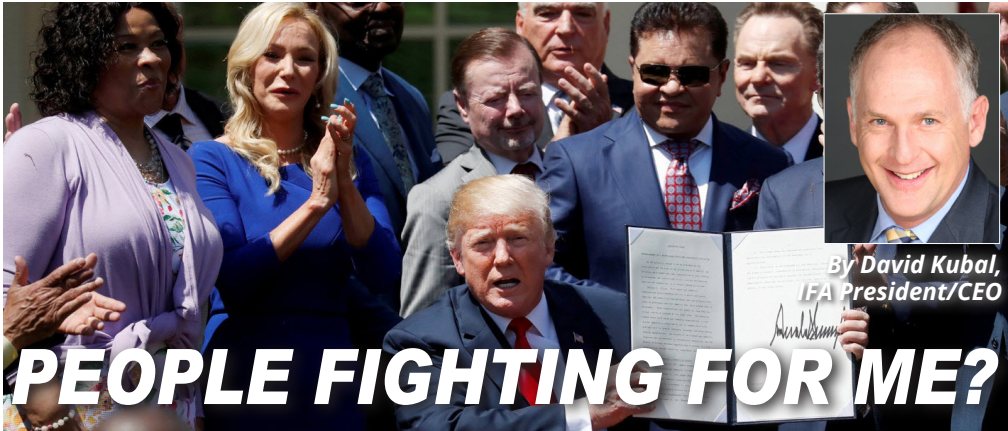




OCTOBER 2019

THE CONNECTER

CONNECTING HEARTS OF PRAYER FOR
THE NATION TO GOD AND EACH OTHER!



Did you know that President Trump has a team of experts in Washington whose express purpose is to protect and promote the religious freedom of people like you and me?

Let's start at the most basic level. Congress, made up of representatives of the population of the United States, is the branch of government that makes laws. The Executive Branch executes and applies the laws that are made by the Congress.

In applying the laws, the Executive Branch enjoys some latitude, as long as it remains within the bounds of the law. Through the years, presidents have used regulations to achieve certain agendas or purposes. For example, the Obama administration emphasized LGBT equality and abortion access and rights. We have also seen the powers of the Executive Branch used to restrict the reach and activities of conservative Christians and their organizations.

The Trump Administration is righting the scales of justice to bring government back in line with the Constitution, which is neutral toward religion. How? The White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative.

Through this initiative, President Trump

is protecting religious freedom, ensuring that religious groups are not excluded from federal programs and that government laws and programs are neutral, not hostile, to people of all faiths, including evangelical Christians.

We have people in our government watching out for us, making sure that the government will not restrict our religious freedom. This is vitally important. These men and women are the tip of the spear in the transformation of our government to align with the values of God. The President has tasked the responsibility of guarding religious freedom to this group of highly capable, highly intelligent experts. (See the tear-off prayer guide for a complete listing.)

I have personally met a number of these experts. They are some of the sharpest people I know and they care deeply about this nation and our freedoms. The hearts of these leaders are genuine. They are very appreciative of prayer. Many of them have left their families in their home states to serve our government at this critical time. These people are the best kept secret in this Administration because of the value of their work. ♦

FIRST FRIDAY PRAYER

October 4, 2019

Please join our conference call to pray for the Centers for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives with Trump Administration officials.
See page 4 for details.

GOVERNMENT

Pray for leaders and employees serving our nation. Pray that God's values would guide our laws. Pray for religious liberty to be protected. Praise God for the many government leaders who seek Him in times of need. (1 Tm 2:1-2; Ps 33:11-12; Gal 5:1; Ps 28:6-7)

THE CHURCH

Pray for the Church to take the lead for restoration of godly values in our nation. Pray for community transformation and godly solutions to society's problems. Pray for biblical compassion. (Eph 3:10; 2 Cor 3:17-18; Jas 1:5; Ps 112:9; Gal 6:9-10)

FAITH PARTNERSHIPS

Praise God that our President values and protects religious freedom. Thank God that the White House is encouraging partnership with faith-based organizations. Praise God that our current Administration recognizes our faith dictates our actions. Thank God that Pres. Trump is keeping his promise to defend and promote religious freedom. (Prv 16:20-21; 1 Cor 2:5; 2 Thes 3:3)

To see God's purposes for America fulfilled through sustained prayer and Spirit-led obedience

Faith and Opportunity Initiatives: Advancing Religious Freedom in our Government

By Judy McDonough, IFA Communications Director

On the National Day of Prayer in 2018, President Trump announced the creation of the White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative. The President explained the purpose of this sweeping initiative, “to assist faith-based and other organizations in their efforts to strengthen the institutions of civil society and American families and communities.”

Over the past year and a half, the White House has worked with the Cabinet agencies to create offices and programs that will engage the faith community in working together with the government to accomplish the goals of the Administration. Although faith-based organizations were often precluded or discouraged from seeking grants and participating in initiatives with the federal government in the past, President Trump has repeatedly acknowledged and emphasized the value and effectiveness of these organizations in local communities. The Executive Order he signed opened the door to faith-based organizations competing for grants, contracts, programs, and other federal funding opportunities.

Now, eleven federal departments have offices for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives (see the tear-off prayer guide). These offices serve as a voice within each department for religious freedom and provide information to faith and community leaders. They also provide policy recommendations within

each department/agency.

We had an opportunity to talk with Mark Zelden, the director of the Centers for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives in the Department of Labor, about his role and how intercessors can be praying for these initiatives.

When asked about how he would describe the value of the Faith and Opportunity Initiatives, his response was deeply encouraging. “I believe the Trump Administration has made outreach to faith-based institutions, associations, and interests a sincere priority. I have especially appreciated the collaborative approach whereby the White House coordinates with Departments as a group on policy projects and customizes to each Department, as warranted.”

These offices within the various departments are having a clear impact on Christians. Although some of the work done is not scintillating enough for breaking news on cable television, Zelden and his office are working on a huge advance for religious freedom. He explained, “At the Labor Department, we are currently in the process of finalizing a rule that we think will properly protect the religious liberty and civil rights of faith-based government contractors.” And Zelden is not doing this alone, but with the full support and assistance of the Trump Administration. “The White House, with its Office of Domestic Policy and Office of Public Affairs, has organized calls with stake-

holders and think tanks on press releases, policy statements, and the like. This is the sort of added muscle needed to have good policy outcomes and a good example of the priority the White House has for faith-based interests.”

Zelden, and the other leaders of Faith and Opportunity Initiatives, also face challenges. For example, it is public knowledge that a group called American Oversight has been asking many Trump officials, including some of these leaders, to submit copies of their calendars and schedule through Freedom of Information (FOIA) requests. This hostile use of FOIA requests is a way to challenge not only the White House, but also the work that they are doing to advance religious freedom and level the playing field for faith-based organizations competing for federal grant money.

In light of these kinds of challenges, and the good work that Zelden is doing, we asked him how intercessors could be praying for him. He answered, “The best way prayers can be helpful for me and others working in policy projects in faith-based space is to know we are not alone. Washington is 95% opposed to the President broadly speaking, and one can feel isolated. It is invigorating to know regular folks across the country are praying for us.”

Would you like to encourage Zelden? Send a postcard with a Bible verse and/or a special prayer for him to the IFA office (P.O. Box 915, Purcellville, VA 20134) and we will hand deliver it to him. ♦

An Interview with Shannon Royce, Director, HHS Partnership Center

1. What do you believe is the importance of the Faith and Opportunity Initiatives in the Trump Administration? HHS specifically? The challenges?

All the Centers for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives (CFOI) located in federal agencies within the Trump Administration play a key role in communicating the Administration's priorities to the American people. The Centers also work to educate our agencies about the issues that are important to faith and grassroots organizations.

This is especially true for the HHS Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives (The Partnership Center), as we serve as the Department's liaison to the faith community and to grassroots organizations.

The Partnership Center engages and communicates with faith-based communities and grassroots organizations, ensuring that local institutions, which hold community trust, have up-to-date information regarding health and human service activities and resources in their area.

We work to build partnerships with community and faith-based organizations, which help HHS serve individuals, families, and communities in need. The Partnership Center works in collaboration with all of the offices that make up HHS to extend the reach and impact of HHS-related programs into communities and to encourage faith-based and

community organizations in their work. Those offices include some you likely know, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or the National Institutes of Health (NIH). It also includes offices you might not know, like the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

The Center is committed to helping grassroots organizations access the necessary tools to reach those in need. **It exists to supply information, resources, and encouragement to faith-based organizations in their service to their communities.** It also works to enable faith-based and community organizations to partner with the government to achieve the goals of HHS. These include:

- Addressing and responding to the opioid crisis ravaging our families and communities;
- Generating needed conversations between faith and science communities around serious mental illness;
- Engaging the faith community to end the HIV epidemic in America before 2030;
- Providing educational resources and leadership on various family-related topics, such as natural family planning, vaccinations, foster care, and adoption, etc.;
- Seeking and removing barriers to full and active engagement by the faith-based community and championing religious liberty in all HHS programs and initiatives.

Across all these efforts, the priorities of the Partnership Center are consistent with the freedoms assured in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, and ensuring the free exercise of religion of individuals and faith-based organizations.

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IFA Office: Post Office Box 915 Purcellville, VA 20134
Tel: 800-USA-PRAY (872-7729)
E-mail: IFA@IFApray.org
IFA website: IFApray.org



FAITH AND OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVES LEADERS



Shannon Royce
Department of Health and
Human Services



Mike Beatty
Department of Agriculture



Pam Pryor
Department of State



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Department of
Homeland Security



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Todd Pauley
Small Business Administration



Richard Youngblood
Department of Housing
and Urban Development

INTERCESSORS FOR AMERICA

Interview with Shannon Royce

Continued from Page 3

2. How have they made a difference?

Tell us about any specific stories you would like to share.

Speaking only for the Partnership Center here at HHS, we have seen tremendous success in our “bridge building” efforts between the faith and health/science communities.

We have seen more and more communities and faith-based leaders getting involved to address the opioid crisis. More individual leaders or congregations have naloxone on hand and received training to use that medicine to bring someone back from the brink of death as a result of an opioid overdose. We are also seeing an increasing openness within faith-based treatment programs to using or working with medication-assisted treatment (MAT).

Finally, we have had thousands of people interested in learning about various forms of mental illness through our Mental Illness 101 Webinar series. We are seeing more communities interested in thinking about how they can address the needs of individuals experiencing mental illness, as well as their caregivers.

3. How can people be praying for you and your agency?

We appreciate prayers for our team and leaders in government. In thinking about the challenges we are seeking to address, we would ask you to pray for wisdom in the decisions in which the Partnership Center is involved.

4. How can people be praying for Christians in government generally?

Please pray that all public servants, including those in HHS, will serve the American people with strength, wisdom, and perseverance. ♦

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

Thank you, David, for spreading the need to pray for our country, you have done so much for IFA. God is moving in our nation today because of our intercession.

Karren

Adonai is continuously revealing how important it is to pray for the country and for believers in Him to unite and battle the spiritual forces in the most effective way—spiritually, not just talk. Thank you for sharing and for bringing us together to do just that. There can be nothing more effective as we unite and follow our Commander-in-Chief. May our love and prayers for His truth and goodness be established and turn this nation.

Elaine

Lord, may we develop a closer relationship with You based on the Bible and prayer. May Your Word get into our hearts and minds and inspire us to speak to You in heartfelt prayer. Lord, our culture is getting more selfish, stubborn, and sinful. We need more of You and less of ourselves. Please pour out Your Spirit generously on Your people. May more people turn towards You in these dark times. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ken

We pray that God will bless IFA and your presence in this swirling storm that rages. We appreciate having your finger on the pulse as we read your prayer updates each morning.

Betsy



FIRST FRIDAY PRAYER CONFERENCE CALL

Please plan on setting these important 30 minutes aside to join with hundreds across the U.S. in praying for America, its leaders, and its citizens on **October 4, 2019 from 12:15 to 12:45 p.m. (ET)**
Call: (712) 775-7430