



Why the Rescue Mission does not take Federal, State or City money

Although framed with the best intentions on the part of this administration, there are legitimate reasons the Rescue Mission will not apply for funds allocated by the Charitable Choice Options administered by the White House Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives or similar programs.

First, the Rescue Mission believes that the money must always follow the conviction. The vision we have to minister to a particular group of people or to address a particular social problem is always a result of the conviction that God has uniquely called us to respond to it. Conviction, is followed by program design and finally by resource development. The sequencing of this is of primary importance in maintaining the authenticity and integrity of the conviction and the program design. When money determines vision, program or conviction it often becomes diluted or polluted.

Second, the Rescue Mission seeks to fund its ministries with the gifts of those who voluntarily, intentionally and cheerfully seek to be in partnership with the Rescue Mission. Tax dollars are not always voluntarily paid, tax payers with the charitable choice options may not direct their tax dollars to a particular charity and although the IRS has made many changes in recent years to be more user-friendly, not all taxes are paid cheerfully.

Third, the Rescue Mission sees every aspect of its work as “ministry.” It would be impossible for the staff of the Mission to “separate out the faith part” of what is done from the “non-faith parts—it is totally integrated.” For the Rescue Mission, every part of what we do is faith permeated.

Fourth, there may be some legal and constitutional issues involved that the Rescue Mission would like to avoid. The entanglement of government and organizations such as the Rescue Mission would necessitate the accounting, monitoring and other over-seeing of programs as well as dollars by government to hinder the religious liberty of the ministry. It is the opinion of the leadership of the Rescue Mission that such a relationship would require an impossible degree of care and skill to avoid legal and ethical boundaries. Such an entanglement may also subject the faith-based organization’s assets to unnecessary risk due to liability judgments when these boundaries were not clear. More attention may be paid to state rules and regulations than to faith, conviction, and practice, thus changing the essence of the faith-based organization.

Some Questions to Ask

- ◆ What are the compliance requirements and potential liability of tax-funded arrangement?
- ◆ What are the terms of the agreement?
- ◆ Who will monitor the implementation for the regulations?
- ◆ How will this monitoring be accomplished?
- ◆ Who will monitor the development of new regulations?
- ◆ What are the reporting requirements?
- ◆ Will there be an audit? What expense will this incur?
- ◆ How much staff will be needed to comply and implement regulations?
- ◆ What guarantee that programs funded today will be funded next year?

Possible Problems

- ◆ Sanctions government-funded religious discrimination in employment.
- ◆ Undermines the role of faith and religious organizations as being prophetic.
- ◆ Transforms ministries into administrative “eligibility centers” requiring the ministry to terminate, report on or otherwise police, sometimes at the expense of doing the “redemptive thing.”
- ◆ Entangles religion with the political appropriation process.
- ◆ Creates unhealthy competition between charities.
- ◆ Creates the possibility of the subordination of religious principle to government policy.