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Many Black Churches Positive About Faith-Based Initiative

On September 19, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (JCPES) released a report at the National Press Club on black church involvement in the redesigned federal-state programs for the poor. Many church leaders have been skeptical of the Bush administration's faith-based and community initiative, but the evidence shows that Bush administration programs have met with a positive reception from many black churches, especially in the Northeast region of the United States.

The 20-page report on the study directed by David A. Bositis of the Joint Center is titled "Black Churches and the Faith-Based Initiative." It is available from the JCPES at 1090 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20005; 202-789-6366.

Among the report's conclusions are that a relatively small number of black churches participate in federal or state programs now open to them (and to all other faith-based organizations) as a result of the faith-based initiative. Of the participating churches, almost half are from the Northeast. Curiously, a greater number of churches that have reservations about, or oppose, the faith-based initiative participate in its programs compared with churches that generally approve the initiative but do not think they should be involved.

Speakers on the panel September 19 included Margaret Simms, interim president of the JCPES, E.J. Dionne of the Brookings Institution, Robert Franklin, a professor at Emory University's Candler School of Theology, Jay Hein, the new director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, and Frederick Davie, president of Public/Private Ventures in Philadelphia. Harold Dean Trulear, a professor of practical theology at Howard University Divinity School in Washington and a Fellow of the Center for Public Justice, played a role in the JCPES project.

—The Editor

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