THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

FALK AUDITORIUM

THE HALO EFFECT AND THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, November 29, 2016

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. DIONNE: I want to welcome everybody here today and I also want to welcome all of the people who are watching online. We are very glad you're with us, as well.

This is a dear moment for me because I was talking to my friend John Dilulio, who has been involved in this work for his entire life, maybe even a life before this one for all we know. And we had our first event in this room on the subject of the work of faith-based organizations in achieving greater social justice and compassion towards the poor 19 years ago, which proves a couple things. One is we are getting really old, but, two, it's a real tribute to my friend John Dilulio's commitment to this work. And he's stuck with and will keep sticking with it, and thank god for that. And so many of the other people here today have been involved in this work from the very beginning and so we are very honored to host this session on a very important report, "The Economic Halo Effect of Historic Sacred Places."

Just to give you a sense of how it's going to go this morning, I'm going to introduce Bob Jaeger, who is the president of Partners for Sacred Places, who will talk a bit about his group and where this report comes from. And then after Bob is finished, I will introduce this extraordinary panel beginning with Professor Ram Cnaan, who is the author of this report, who will present it and will have responses to the report and then we will open it up for questions.

Because I never want to forget, I really want to thank a whole group of people who made this event possible, above all my personal assistant, Adam Waters, who's way more than a personal assistant, and Anna Goodbaum, Liz Sablich, Mo Batal, and Clara Hendrickson all here at Brookings; Erica Chung, who works with John Dilulio; and Dana Mayber, who works with Melissa Rogers. We thank them all very much.

I'm going to keep the intros brief because there are materials that have a full treatment of the extraordinary lives of all of these people. I just want to announce

formally that I will be referring to Mayor Goode as the Reverend Mayor Goode because I think being a mayor is the hardest job in America and anyone who's held that job should always have it attached to their title.

Bob Jaeger is the president of Partners for Sacred Places, which he co-founded in 1989. It's the only national nonsectarian not-for-profit focused on building the capacity of congregations of historic places to better serve their communities as anchor institutions. And before that he was with the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation as senior vice president for the Historic Religious Properties Program. He knows what he is talking about. He's been engaged in this work for a long time, as well, and we're really honored to have you with us, Bob. And thank you for letting us host this event. (Applause)

MR. JAEGER: Good morning, everybody. And thank you, E.J., and thank you, Brookings. E.J. has been moderating and encouraging this kind of conversation for almost 20 years now. It's hard to believe, so thank you.

And our special thanks, also, to John Dilulio, who has helped to bring this event together and brought many of us in the room to this place. He has guided and inspired some of our work for, gosh, more than 20 years. So, John, thank you for your key role.

And I just want to say a quick word of thanks to Ram Cnaan, who you'll be hearing from shortly as a panelist. His collegiality, his scholarly brilliance really, and his willingness to take a new and explored issue in American life and bring it to center stage is a major contribution to American life and scholarship. So thank you, Ram. It's been a pleasure to work with you.

So there's lots of thanks to go around, but I really want to move quickly to why we did this. Why did Partners for Sacred Places work with Ram and the University of Pennsylvania to take on the study? What's the question that we wanted to answer?

And I think the question was how large is the contribution that congregations and sacred places make to our civic life, to our community life? Back in the '90s, when I worked with E.J. and John on a previous report, we learned something about the value of the spaces that congregations share in their buildings, but we kind of knew in the succeeding 20 years that it was much bigger. There's a bigger story here.

So the question we were asking is, are Methodist churches of value to people who are not Methodists? Are Catholic churches of value to people who are not Catholics? Are synagogues important to people who are not in the Jewish community? And the answer is a resounding yes.

What we've learned, and you'll hear lots more from Ram and the panel in a moment, America's older churches and synagogues bring major economic value to their communities. They make a significant contribution to local employment, to education, to children and families, to the performing arts, and to overall neighborhood health. It's not about religion. Although religion and faith drives it, really the larger effect is much larger.

Now, this should not be news to our civic leaders, but often, too often, it is. So John and E.J. and others, some things have changed since 1998, but some things have not changed, so that's why I think we're here.

So our new understanding that you'll see in the report that you have, that you'll hear about from the panel, suggests that the secular world has a significant stake in the health and vitality of congregations and sacred places because the impact in value is not religious in nature. For leaders in government, philanthropy, community development, the arts and social services, among others, those people that care about the health and vitality of our communities, especially outside the core downtown or a city or a town investments in sacred places pays major dividends.

For example, sacred places support local businesses and employment. You'll more details in a moment. Education and spending are two key pieces of this.

Just a little example, visitors to a congregation over the course of a year generate several hundred thousand dollars in value. The same argument that's made for convention centers and sports stadiums can be made for congregations because they draw people into the community; they'll spend money.

Sacred places incubate and support nonprofit organizations. This is really important for philanthropy to hear this. They have a lot of space available these days because they're smaller often than they used to be, so they can accommodate nonprofits that are growing or are dislocated because of changes in their needs and circumstances. And because congregations are often willing to share their space at a very low cost, they can provide a crucial incubation role for new and growing nonprofits and startup organizations.

Another key piece of the larger argument here is that sacred places support the building of social capital. The local church or synagogue is trusted by parents and families and other key populations, and can provide a natural setting for programs and events that help local residents form new bonds and take action and response to local problems and opportunities.

So just to sum it up, at a moment now when government and philanthropy is looking for ways to support community facilities and community work affordably and sustainably, sacred places can be a smart way to invest. Sacred places are usually located at key intersections and are adjacent to key populations that are targeted by government and philanthropy. And they're owned by nonprofit institutions, namely congregations, that often share the goals and the values of philanthropy and government.

So I think what we're doing today is painting a picture of enormous economic and community value and unrealized -- they do a lot, but there's a lot of potential that's unrealized. And there's a lot we can do to work with these institutions to make the most of what they have.

So on behalf of all of us at Partners for Sacred Places, and I particularly want to point out Tuomi Forrest, who led the effort, for those who are in the room and can see him, he led and honchoed this effort; and Rachel Hildebrandt from Partners, who did a lot of the work and knows "Halo" better than I will ever know it, thank you for being in the audience and being a part of our conversation today.

Thank you for joining us and for honoring and exploring the civic value of sacred places today. Thank you for coming. (Applause)

And I know E.J. will introduce the panelists in a moment, but we would like to welcome Dr. Ram Cnaan, Dr. William Galston, Dr. Wilson Goode, and Melissa Rogers to come forward, and then E.J. will introduce them for you. Thank you.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you so much for that introduction. I think there are two themes here. It's like that old ad for Levy's Real Rye Bread, you don't have to be religious to honor the contributions of sacred places to our civic and economic life. But if you are religious, it's good to know that sacred places live up to the scriptural lessons that faith without works is dead and that the obligation of religious people is to bring about a day when justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream, my favorite line from the "I Have a Dream" speech.

I'm just going to briefly introduce this wonderful panel. Dr. Ram Cnaan is a professor and director of the Program for Religion and Social Policy Research at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy and Practice. He is the founder and faculty director of the Goldring Reentry Initiative, which works to reduce recidivism. He is the author of eight books. Again, all these bios are available to you, but it's been a real honor to work with Dr. Cnaan over many years.

The Reverend Dr. Mayor W. Wilson Goode is the director and organizer of the nationally acclaimed Amachi Program, a national faith-based mentoring model for children of incarcerated parents. Previously, Dr. Goode led groundbreaking work in faith-based housing for low- and moderate-income persons. He broke racial barriers are

Philadelphia's first African-American mayor, serving for two terms. And he was deputy assistant secretary for education during the Clinton administration.

Melissa Rogers, a dear, dear friend and a partner in this work here and elsewhere over almost as many years as I've been working with John, is currently special assistant to President Obama and executive director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. She previously served as the director of the Center for Religion and Public Affairs at Wake Forest University Divinity School and, I am proud to say, as a nonresident senior fellow in the Governance Studies Program here at Brookings.

Bill Galston holds the Ezra K. Zilkha chair in Brookings' Governance Studies Program, where he serves as a senior fellow. He is an expert in so many areas. He is a person of practical politics and a political philosopher at the same time. And again, it's been a great honor for me to work with Bill over the years on a great many projects.

And I'll introduce John now, who will come up later on in the program. John Dilulio is the indispensable person. He is the Frederic Fox Leadership professor of politics, religion, and civil society at the University of Pennsylvania. He directs the Fox Leadership Program for undergraduates. He majored in economics at Penn, received his Ph.D. in political science from Harvard University. He is the author and editor of all sorts of books. But I am particularly proud that that first partnership 19 years ago led to a book that we did together called *What's God Got to Do with the American Experiment?* And, John, I love you. Thank you.

So Dr. Cnaan will kick this off and tell us all that we can learn from his study. Thanks for being here, Ram.

MR. CNAAN: Can you hear me? Better? Thank you. So I was charged with being the boring presenter to tell you everything that is written here, which is close to impossible. So I will keep my remarks to the report, what it means and some aspects of

it, but I encourage you all to read it because there are many gems in it that I cannot cover.

So basically what we tried to do is called valuation. Not evaluation, but valuation. Valuation is a science that says what is the economic value of something to a certain group. What we tried to do is say what is the economic value of religious congregations to their immediate communities, to their cities, to the region? Some of it is the money they spend locally. Some of it is the economic contribution they do by being there. Also, if you are interested in a two hours lecture about valuation, please see me after the event. (Laughter)

So what did we find that I can summarize quickly? An average congregation, basic economic contribution to its local economy is equal to $1.7 million. Now, this number seems to some people a lot and many people say it's very modest. If we take the 90 congregations we studied together and put them as one block, we jump to $1.5 billion. If you want to extrapolate it to all congregations, you get astronomical numbers.

We found that there was no financial differences between the three cities that we studied. We studied Philadelphia, Chicago, and Fort Worth, Texas. So if these three very different cities yield similar results, there's some hope that we can say that this is a national average, though I would never say it in an academic setting.

Some of the congregations are very rich, large in number, and contribute the largest number to our findings. But we also have very small declining congregations that are hardly surviving. In fact, two or three of the congregations that participated in the study no longer exist. So it's not like we selected the top rich congregation and gave you a biased number. We believe that it's quite close to the reality on the ground, though maybe a larger study sometime in the future would prove us right or wrong.

So where are our numbers coming from? Basically, from four key areas and it's really highly developed and explained in the report. First is direct spending. The

money that the congregation gets from members, most of it, the studies debate if it's 80 or 90 percent, is spent locally. It's spent locally on salaries of people who live in the area and then consume in the area. They consume lots of services and goods from local vendors, and enhance the economic vitality of the area.

The second source is education. Many of the congregations have their own school from preschool all the way to high schools. Every kid that goes to a religious school is one less cost for the local Board of Education in terms of financing schools. So people who send their children to a religious school pay tuition to the religious school and still pay taxes in the local authority. So having those congregations is a major contribution to the local economy.

That is what we call "the magnet effect." Congregations provide opportunities for people from the local area and out of the local area to come and visit. From celebrations, from exhibitions, family reunions, a special holiday, concerts, all those bring people to the area and people who come to the area spend money. If they spend money, it's a contribution to the local economy.

And then there's what we call "the invisible safety net." The invisible safety net is the volunteering, the space provided by congregations, and all the labor that is being done by the congregation, including in-kind support that usually goes unreported.

The number one contribution is education, 40 percent; direct spending, 32 percent; magnet effect, 22 percent; invisible safety net, 6 percent. It's all in the report; you don't have to take notes.

Let me stress that this is a very, very conservative estimate. One thing that I do in my academic work, and it's not included here, is the value of the services to the quality of life of people. The people that are helped getting out of prison, people that are helped in stop abusing drugs, people that are helped with a family crisis, all the social contributions are not measures in this report. So any which way you look at it, it's conservative.

If any of the people that we studied said I don't know the value of something, we put it as zero. If anyone gave us a number that clearly was outlandish, we put it as zero. So we did every possible effort to be conservative, not to be taken by people and say, oh, you love religion, so you put it a higher number.

Now, in case you don't know, I'm not a religious person. I don't go to any place of worship. I'm only interested in this academically. So let me give you two more pieces of information, or three, and then I'll open it to my colleagues here.

One of the interesting findings is that on average every congregation in our study provides employment for five full-time people and six part-time people. They can be clergy, they can be secretaries, they can be teachers, they can be music directors, they can be janitors. But imagine what happened if you one day say the congregations don't exist anymore. You'll have a massive unemployment at a scale that we are not used to.

The other point that I want to mention and emphasize, most of the money that is counted in this report is voluntarily paid by members. There are very few sources of money that don't come from members or from bequests of members. So we're not talking about ability to get grants from the government to provide services, which is also very important and very powerful in religious organizations, but congregations. The majority of their existence, most of the money that we counted in the value, is voluntarily.

So to sum up my point, and I hope you'll have questions for me later on, the way I look at it is that this study moved congregations from being able to provide an anecdote of what they do and be apologetic and modest about their importance into being able to provide numbers. This is how much we are contributing to the quality of life, to the economic vitality of a neighborhood, and be proud of how much they're important.

Thank you. (Applause)

REVEREND GOODE: Good morning. Fifty years ago, when I started my work with faith-based organizations, I did not have any supportive data to support what we were trying to do. I could not point to anything that would convince city and neighborhood folk, who were often opposed to almost everything, to help them understand what was going on. And even as these 50 or so organizations created more than 2,000 housing units worth $100 million, they were not interested in having it located because they were not convinced it had any value. This “Halo Effect” report adds value, an important value, to folks still doing this work.

My second point. As struggling historic sacred places in gentrified and gentrifying communities seek to find ways to keep their doors open, this “Halo Effect” report gives them a tool to negotiate with cities and communities and funding sources in terms of trying to get done what needs to be done in their communities.

My third point is that 20 years ago, when I did my research on what congregations and faith communities could do to add value to their presence in communities, I focused on outreach to the surrounding communities. And my recitation called “From Clubhouse to Lighthouse: A Dialogical Approach to Congregational Transformation,” the outreach is still needed by congregations and by their members and by those who need to do this work. But now we can add that the very existence, the very presence of these sacred places in communities have strong economic value on these communities and should be treated as such.

My fourth point. Sacred places are under attack by neighborhoods and zoning boards across the country. And whereas there are legal restrictions to what cities and counties and zoning boards can do, it is still a huge advantage, in my view, to have this research study to add to the arsenal of weapons -- I didn’t mean to use those terms -- weapons of congregations and faith-based organizations to fight back with information.

And my final point is that I want to congratulate Partners for Sacred Places for providing evidence. I think it’s always good for people of good will to have

evidence to do what they do, that sacred places have enormous value to communities and cities where they are located. Not just value of morality and social justice, but economic value, which places congregations -- and I've said this across the years, the two most important institutions in our community is the schoolhouse and the church house, the synagogue, or the mosque or temple. But they are important and we need to continue to suggest that they are important.

And I would just close that this research is a critical, enormous breakthrough for congregations and faith organizations across this country. The fact that a single institution in a community has a $1.7 million impact is something which I think that we all can take and go back and do what we do much better.

Thank you. (Applause)

MS. ROGERS: Good morning. Thanks to Ram for his work on this report. Thanks to Robert and Partners for Sacred Places for supporting it. And I also want to thank Reverend Mayor Goode, Bill Galston, and E.J. and John and Brookings generally for organizing this event and this labor of love I'd have to call it for more than 20 years in this space.

And thanks to all of you for joining the conversation. I see so many friends and it's great to be with you this morning. I'm looking forward to the conversation a little later.

I'd like to focus my remarks mostly on what the report calls "the invisible safety net": the value of volunteer time and space for community programs that congregations provide, contributions that make a crucial difference. The study says, for example, and Ram points out, that these are very conservative estimates, but the average contribution of a congregation via its invisible safety net is over $100,000 per congregation.

Now, unlike Ram, I'm no social scientist, but those findings certainly match my experience running the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood

Partnerships for the past four years. And if you'll permit me, I just want to mention that some of my colleagues representing agency centers for faith-based and neighborhood partnerships, as well as some members of our Advisory Council for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, are here today. And I wonder if I could just ask them to stand real quick so we can recognize them. (Applause)

Thank you. So as the study indicates, while houses of worship are just that, places where people come together to worship, and worship is obviously incredibly important as a religious matter to countless Americans, we make a serious mistake if we think that houses of worship are only serving that function. Indeed, I've never encountered a congregation that thought that the worship that happened on Friday or Saturday or Sunday or another day didn't have something to do with what we ought to be doing the rest of the week, including through our service to our communities.

Now, as Ram said, the reason congregations engage in these acts of service is obviously because of faith. But as the report demonstrates that service has significance far beyond the faith community that does the serving. It matters to people of all faiths and beliefs who are served every day at congregations across the United States.

And by the way, one of the report's very useful findings, and this was alluded to earlier, is that 87 percent of the beneficiaries of programs at houses of worship are not themselves members of that particular congregation. And I should say that that, too, matches our own experience working at the federal and with state and local governments on this matter.

So that service matters to all these people who are served of many different faiths and beliefs. It matters to others, as well, including us, government officials and policymakers, who care deeply about people who are struggling, but sometimes we ourselves struggle to try to find these folks and to help them adequately. And that's where faith and community groups are so crucial in terms of their partnership with

government.

So all this helps to explain why, for example, former President Bill Clinton pursued partnerships in this area; why George W. Bush opened the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives at the White House with a brilliant Penn social scientist, I might add, at its helm. (Laughter) Our friend John Dilulio. And why President Obama kept this office, although made a few changes in its focus and operation.

So even with the fragmentation that we see today across a range of issues, I think we can still come together around this fundamental truth, Republicans and Democrats and people of all ideologies, religious and non-religious, around the idea that religious and community groups ought to be in conversation with government and ought to collaborate with government in serving others in constitutional ways.

Another important finding of the report is how much congregations vary in size and in other ways. In this same vein we have found such a variety of partners to work with. And we should note that not every congregation wants a government grant or contract for their service work. Many pursue them, some do not. Some have theological reasons for not seeking government money and some believe simply that they don't have the capacity to administer a government grant or contract. Nevertheless, we have found that many, if not most, congregations do want to collaborate with the government in some way. At the very least, they want to have an open line of communication.

And many want to collaborate in other ways. For example, they want to make their space available for the delivery of federally subsidized meals for children through the Summer Food Service Program. They want to learn from the Department of Labor about how to start a jobs club and learn about best practices in these jobs clubs that help the unemployed and the underemployed. Or they want to invite a FEMA representative to their congregation for a community meeting about how to prepare so that they will not face such dire damage in a disaster.

So from the very beginning of the Obama administration we have

understood that partnerships in this area are not limited to monetary rewards and other financial assistance, but can also involve other ways for governmental and nongovernmental leaders to come together to tackle problems, including the ones described above.

Finally, let me just say a couple words about some of the policy implications of the report. First, the report finds, and Reverend Mayor Goode mentioned this, that sometimes municipalities have issued regulations that unnecessarily restrict and constrain the activities of houses of worship. And the report I think wisely suggest that congregations and public officials should work together to navigate bureaucratic red tape and encourage better coordination.

And as I said earlier, we couldn't agree more on the need for greater coordination here. And I'll just mention toward this end that for the past eight years the Obama administration has enforced the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, sometimes known as RLUIPA, a law that protects sacred places from discrimination and unnecessary burdens in land use matters.

Second, the report notes that sometimes congregations are still not invited to the table with local governments and community groups plan economic development programs, for example, and we need to work more on that. Again, we could not agree more on the need to continue to make strides here. We have made a lot of progress here. We've come a long way, but there's no question that sometimes still religious leaders and entities in general or minority faith leaders and entities in particular are not as well integrated into these efforts as they could or should be. Not due to hostility to religion, in my experience, but perhaps due to outdated invitation lists or some lingering sense that religion is something separate and has to be done separately or maybe a lack of contacts within diverse religious communities.

So I think it's very important as we look back on the progress that we've made to remind ourselves that we have to keep reaching out to make sure that everyone

is invited to the table, including religious leaders and institutions, as a matter of regular practice. And this includes religious leaders whether they are Methodist, Mormon, or Muslim.

In closing, I'd just like to say a word of thanks to the many faith and community partners, some of whom are gathered here today, with whom we've been able to work over the course of the administration. As we say in a letter that we've released this morning to our partners, we want to say thanks during this time of thanksgiving. We have been so deeply honored by the opportunity to work with you over the course of the administration, and we're going to keep working with you to the very end and beyond. But I do want to say a special word of thanks for the opportunity to join hands with you and to change lives for the better.

Thank you. (Applause)

MR. DIONNE: Before Bill speaks I just want to say that I don't care what Ram's researchers say, I put the economic value of this panel at $10 billion. (Laughter) And that's before the contributions from Bill and John, so I suggest you buy now at 10 billion. But thank you for that beautiful tribute to the work of these groups, Melissa.

MR. GALSTON: If you buy now, you'll be buying at the peak, I'm afraid. (Laughter) And, you know, given everything that's gone on in this room in the past two decades, I'm beginning to wonder whether Falk Auditorium shouldn't qualify as a sacred place. (Laughter)

You know, when I accepted this assignment, I was really racking my brains, what could I contribute to this conversation? And I finally decided I could do two things. First of all, I could tell a personal story and, secondly, as John Dilulio has encouraged me to do, I could raise a few skeptical questions that the author of the report and other panelists might want to respond to.

As it happens, I'm a member of two organizations celebrating their 100th birthday this year: The Brookings Institution and my synagogue, Tifereth Israel. And let

me just tell you, you know everything probably you need to know or want to know about Brookings, but let me tell you about my little synagogue.

It's located on upper 16th Street in the District. That's very significant. In the last 1950s, as the congregation had outgrown its home in the heart of Washington, D.C., the question on the table was whether the congregation should move to the suburbs, like just about every congregation like us was doing at the time. And the answer, which was not an easy answer to reach, was no, we weren't going to do that. We're going to stay and try to be a contributing member of a diverse, at that point biracial, community, and now obviously much more diverse than that.

So we built on upper 16th Street, hired a crusading young rabbi, now the venerable rabbi emeritus almost six decades later. And so Tifereth Israel became a focal point for the civil rights community. Many people who came to the March on Washington slept on air mattresses in the various rooms of Tifereth Israel. And it has tried to be a contributing member of the community ever since. Most of the work that our Social Action Committee does is directed to people who are not members of the congregation, completely consistent with the findings of this report.

So when I read the report, you know, I had what the literary critics call a shock of recognition. I said, hey, that's us. Right? And I have to say that even the categorical framework of this report, the division of the analysis into education, direct spending, magnet effects, and the invisible safety net, is a very substantial contribution to not just clear thinking, but even clear seeing in this area. And I'll never look at my little congregation in exactly the same way again, so thank you, thank you, thank you.

Let me just raise a few questions. And you'll forgive the note of skepticism, but this is Brookings after all. (Laughter)

First of all, on a very technical note, it would be very nice to have median figures as well as mean figures, even adjusted mean figures.

Secondly, it would be great to have the denominators as well as the

numerators. For example, there's a figure early in the report to the effect that projecting these results to all of the congregations in the three target cities -- Chicago, Philadelphia, and Fort Worth -- would produce sort of value-added according to this metric of $3 billion. Okay. Is that bigger than a bread basket? Is it 1 percent of the GDP of these cities? Is it 5 percent, 10 percent? What is the meaning of that figure? It's hard to know in isolation, even though in isolation it looks impressive.

Another skeptical question is the distinction between activities and places. It is true that bar mitzvahs are held in synagogues typically, although lots of bar mitzvah activities are outside of synagogues. But I would bet that Seders generate 10 times as much income to local communities as bar mitzvahs do. And if I had more time, I would explain why that's the case. So I think attributing value to the places as opposed to faith-based activities, many of which are not in the places, is something that needs to be thought through.

We also need to think through the extent to which we are talking about the displacement of economic activity rather than a net addition to it. For example, there are many, many synagogues that are closer to our house than the one we go to. So, yeah, we use more gas than we would if we went to the local synagogue and we buy that gas in another jurisdiction as opposed to our home jurisdiction. Does that count as economic value added or is it simply a move from one line in the balance sheet to another line in the same balance sheet?

There's also, it seems to me, the other side of the ledger that needs to be considered, namely the fact that these organizations, like other nonprofits, are the recipient of massive tax subsidies. How does that count? And, you know, I can tell you that just looking at my own family, the federal government is picking up more than 40 percent of the contribution that my wife and I make to our synagogue, which is not small. And it might be smaller, I don't know, if the tax code were changed, as it's going to be.

Final point, and this will not come out right, but I'll just put it on the table,

you know, there is a whiff of special pleading in the report, you know, that this analysis will be used in the service of persuading municipal governments to invest more in sacred places. That may or may not be the right way to go. And I would say, for example, that given the historic dynamism of American religion and religious congregations, the idea that communities should bend over backwards to preserve congregations where they are and channel public expenditures to that end is not an idea I'm necessarily comfortable with. It doesn't strike me necessarily as the best use of scarce public funds.

But there is one point that I want to underscore, which I think the report is absolutely right about, and that is the disproportionate impact of public regulation on smaller faith communities, and Melissa alluded to that in her comments. I think that is a very important point. And I would remind religious liberals that it is a point of wider application.

Small businesses, too, have a valid complaint about the disproportionate impact of otherwise justified regulations on their activities. And so it seems to me in this area, as in many areas, what is sauce for the goose ought to be sauce for the gander, as well.

Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. DIONNE: I was so grateful when Bill agreed to be a respondent on this panel because I knew he would be simultaneously religiously faithful and social scientifically skeptical, and that was just a wonderful set of questions.

Here's my plan. I want to pose a question to each of the panelists and then I want to open it up to all of you, reserving my right to jump back in if I feel like it. (Laughter)

Ram, basically, rather than ask you a specific question, I just would like you to respond to some of Bill's comments and questions because I think that would be very useful.

Mayor Goode, I would like to ask you to talk a bit about the notion that

local governments and community organizations are sometimes hesitant to embrace the construction of new churches and what that means and with some experiences about that and the problems that poses.

To Melissa I'd like to pose a very specific question, which is all your life, Melissa, you have been very concerned about constitutional protections of religion, which includes both the free exercise clause and the non-establishment clause. And I'd just like to talk to you, especially after your four years of experience, you know, what is your thinking about how we do honor liberty and pluralism while engaging in useful public partnerships.

And Bill, I'm leaving you last because I want to ask you a philosophical or a kind of philosophical question. I realized when we contemplated this that we were celebrating a report that thinks about the sacred and the profane. We are really saying here that churches produce a lot of money for communities, which in its own way seems like an odd thing to talk about at all at churches, synagogues, mosques. And yet there is such a rich history. One thinks of Tocqueville, going back to Tocqueville, of thinking about the relationship between civil society, the public good, and government. I'd just like you to reflect a bit on that and perhaps some of your own discomfort about it, which was reflected, I thought, in your thoughtful comment at the end about stressing too much the question of the economic value of these institutions when their real value may actually be, if I may put it this way, higher.

So let me start with Ram. We'll work down the panel and then we will open it up to the audience.

MR. CNAAN: Thank you, Bill. This is coming back home. Now I'm back in social science discussions. And I first have to admit all the comments that Bill made are legitimate.

We are dealing with a field that is in its infancy. When I talk with my students about this study I say my dream is that in two years somebody will come and

say I did a better study than yours. I did something that is even more refined than you could have thought about. Now I have numbers that are higher than yours, lower than yours, more sophisticated than yours. I'd love it. I'd like somebody to come and challenge us on those numbers, but not with I believe that, but somebody that comes like Bill and say what about this? Let's talk about that.

So some of the comments are just right and you can't include them in a report. I mean, we could have used medians. But if some people look at this report and say it's too technical once we put medians, half the people in the room would throw it away, and rightly so. So we give some information. For people who like more specific information I'd love to get in a conversation with. There are many issues that we have to make decisions what we put in, what we exclude, what kind of value we give to certain things. So we did it.

In another piece that I wrote, I tried to compare our numbers with the budgets of those cities and give a proportion of it. And people said, well, how can you compare the real budget of Philadelphia versus contribution that some of the contributions are just valued and not real hard money. So in some presentations where I go talk about this research I include it and some of them I don't include it, but it's a very valid point. I mean, I say it's a large number. I say it's a huge number. Some of you look at this and say, oh, that's all? And Bill is very right and very correct, we should have included something. But then other people would say why do you compare it?

I like your point about the gas and traveling to your congregation. So gas spent is questionable, but if you eat in a restaurant next to where your congregation is, this is a direct contribution to the economy of this area. And we know based on studies in tourism how much people who go to another place spending locally when they reach there, on average. So some numbers may not be applied. As I said, there's a question of sophistication, how much you can estimate. But a number comes from the best source that we have in tourism and visiting bureaus across the country to assess

how much people spend when they come on a daily basis, on an overnight basis. Is it always correct? I don't know, but we live on estimates and averages across the country.

But all the points that were made are correct. The one thing that I totally, totally agree with Bill that we didn't do, we didn't say what is the cost of a congregation? But in the same essence we don't ask what is the cost of other nonprofit organizations? So in a way, we only talk about the contribution, we don't talk about tax deduction, we don't talk about city taxes, tax exemption. It's there. And as I said, compared to where we were a few years back where we knew nothing about the economic contribution, we are now way ahead. And my wish, as I said, that in a few years somebody will invite me to show me how unsophisticated this work is.

And is somebody is listening, my dream is somebody to come and fund me to do a national study. (Laughter) So if you are there or listening elsewhere, I'm here. (Laughter)

MR. DIONNE: A direct grant application right here. Mayor Goode.

REVEREND GOODE: Thank you so much. I have experienced probably over the last 15 years probably at least a dozen instances of communities and cities and zoning boards opposing the siting and the location of congregations. And I would just like to use an example, a current situation which is going on at the church that I've been a member of for 62 years.

We rebuilt one building and then we purchased a Catholic church with a school and with the rectory and convent and a sanctuary. And we found that although that was working good for us that when the school district of Philadelphia put on the market schools, that we felt that we wanted to offer a bid for one of the schools that would allow us in a community not too far from where we are to provide for services for the community and services for young people, for those who -- many Catholic churches don't have large social facilities. They have large sanctuaries, but don't have large social facilities. So we're trying to buy the school and this has been going on now for two years.

And the elected city council person for the area said that he was for it, but that the community wanted an institution or a company to buy the school who would, in fact, use it to create jobs.

And once that was done, the community became actively involved. And although a meeting was held, the community voted for the location of the church at the facility. The school district that was going to sell the building has not yet sold it even though we had the lowest -- and the highest rather and best bid for the site. We have brought a lawyer in who has told them you can't be against use because we're a church.

And so I would say that there is, in Philadelphia that I have the most experience with, there is in some communities just outright hostility, especially in the older sacred places in gentrified neighborhoods, to the church remaining there. You know, they were there before the others came in, but remaining there. But there's also hostility to churches locating in other parts of the city. And I just think that this report, at least for me at this point as a recovering politician, for me at this point provides me with something I can go to the councilmen and say read this, look at this, and let me know whether or not you think that there is some opportunity for job creation here and for an economic enhancement of this community by the location of the congregation in this community.

So I think that, from my point of view, I think that, as I said, this gives us a real tool, those of us who fight and work daily with faith organizations, a real tool that we can go to elected officials and to community groups and begin to have an addition argument that we can present to them as to why they ought to do it.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you so much. Melissa.

MS. ROGERS: Yeah, thanks, E.J., for the question. You know, our commitment has certainly been in all our work to honor both the letter and the spirit of the religious liberty guarantees that we treasure in our country, including the ones found in the First Amendment while doing this partnership work. And I think that can all be

accomplished, but that's not to say that it's always easy. It requires work and a lot of discussions across different lines. Let me just mention two ways in which we've tried to get some of these issues, specific ways.

The administration has implemented some reforms of some of the rules that govern partnerships between the government and faith-based and community organizations to augment religious liberty protections for beneficiaries. So we never have or we never want to have and I don't think religious organizations want to do this, but we want to make sure that it doesn't happen, is that a beneficiary is told, well, you know, you're not the right religion, so you can't have your federal benefits or you have to participate in, you know, some kind of religious experience in order to get some kind of benefit of a direct federal aid program. So we've wanted to protect beneficiaries to a greater extent than they had been through the rules in the past.

At the same time, we wanted to add protections to ensure that religious groups can always participate in making application for federal funding and be treated equally in consideration for federal funding. There's much more work to do here, but I'm glad we've been able to take those steps.

Also, one of our convictions has always been that it's essential to recognize that under our Constitution there are no second class faiths in the United States of America. So we cannot move forward with these partnerships if some faith groups feel marginalized. That would not be consistent with the letter and the spirit of the Constitution. So we have to continue to welcome people of all faiths into the conversation table. There's much more work to do here, but that's an obligation we've taken very seriously.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you, Melissa. And Bill, with my semi-philosophical question.

MR. GALSTON: Right, and I'll give you much less than a semi-philosophical answer just because, among other things, the audience has been very

patient. And dealing with your question as it deserves to be dealt with would consume all of our remaining time and more, so --

MR. DIONNE: I'm trying to inspire a brilliant Galston essay someday.

MR. GALSTON: Right. Well, so let me just make three points very quickly.

Number one, I was thinking of entitling my brief remarks "Tocqueville Meets Contemporary Social Science." And I see nothing unholy about moving from qualitative sociology to quantitative sociology.

Which brings me to my second point, and that is -- and once again, I don't mean this invidiously -- this is excellent impartial research that is being placed in the service of a particular kind of policy advocacy, as Mayor Goode just illustrated and as the report is very, I think, clear and frank to acknowledge at the end. And if you're doing policy advocacy, you have to employ the kind of rhetoric of advocacy that is appropriate to the matter at hand. And so if you're trying to affect the decisions of municipal governments in a very particular way, you should not make the argument that members of the city council will be spiritually ennobled if they vote for a particular regulation or piece of zoning or placement of a non-faith-based, nonprofit in a sacred space. That would be inappropriate and unpersuasive. So I see absolutely nothing wrong about this sort of mixing of the sacred and the profane.

Which brings me to my third point in conclusion, and that is in the appendix there is a reference to an article published under the aegis of the Partnership for Sacred Places with the title "If You Do Not Count It, It Does Not Count." Okay, now that is an excellent principle if it can be kept within due bounds. And one of the perennial challenges and downsides of counting is that you become one of those people who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. In other words, there are many, many circumstances in which what can't be counted is much more important than what we can count. And as long as we keep that firmly in mind at every step along the way,

we'll navigate Scylla and Charybdis. If not, we'll be wrecked on the shoals.

Thank you.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you, Bill. I'm going to try to bring in three people at a time to get as many people as we can. This gentleman was the first hand I saw, the gentleman right behind him.

Thank you, Bill. Yes, why don't you start with this gentleman and then you? And then one other voice. And not everybody has to answer every question. And this is a preacherly crowd, so try to keep your questions short and put a question mark at the end of it.

MR. GETMAN: Thanks, E.J. I'm Tom Getman, a retired World Vision executive and member of a huge church on Capitol Hill that is chairing the refugee program, the receiving of Syrian refugees. So two questions.

One, why is it that you didn't check the follow-on impact of churches and congregations on NGOs? World Vision is one of the largest, 3 billion a year, half of it comes from church people and churches.

And the second is why is there no reference to Islamic, in this era of Islamophobia, no Islamic communities included in the study.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. And then right behind you. That will be for Ram, I think.

SPEAKER: Well, and I want to thank this gentleman for his question, which led directly into my question as to Mr. Galston's ideas of advocacy. Has it been measured or is it possible to measure the kinds of funds that go overseas to help others, not just helping people in our own neighborhoods, but helping others across the sea? Because I think most would agree that children overseas are also god's children. And part of, I think, the responsibilities of most congregations.

Also, you know, I used to manage the Save Darfur Coalition, which was an advocacy program. And Ms. Rogers spoke at one of our Save Darfur events across

the street from the White House. Has there been any way to measure the impact of advocacy, both direct, such as human rights advocacies, or advocacy for increased funding that World Vision has been a part of? And also a group called Bread for the World, where they are advocating for the government to do work and moving people along to move our legislators closer to the divine as expressed by the advocates within congregations.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. And a third hand, who wants to jump in? Over there.

By the way, I just want to take this opportunity to thank our friend Bob Faherty for being here. When he was at the Brookings Press he was an extraordinary supporter of our work in this area. Thank you for coming, Bob.

MR. KOVACH: I'm Peter Kovach, retired Foreign Service officer and kind of an interfaith activist. I thank you for the research. I wonder about measuring or the measurability of interfaith activity because I think there's a huge synergy in a lot of our communities in that respect. And while I think tangibly it comes out more in combined good works, it's also reinforced by kind of inner contemplative exercise and some more abstract things that not everyone's going to be comfortable with. That's my question. Thanks.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. So Ram and Melissa and then if Bill or the Reverend Mayor want to jump in, please feel free. But, Ram, some of those are directly at you.

MR. CNAAN: Well, let me start with international issues. First, we try to focus only on congregations, not even on non-religious, nonprofit organizations. I did a paper in religions on religious international social development. We tried to account for all the work that American organizations do in international social development. We didn't do quantification in terms of money, but we tried to respond and outline all the activities that American religious organizations do in international social development.

It's a different topic. It's hard to measure. There's less reliable statistics and it was much more difficult to collect data. But this is a different topic that I care about, that I tried to find some information, and we just published it last year.

Data faith activity is wonderful. It's very important. It's one of the things that is even more difficult to put a value onto. We spent hours, Rachel here in the audience, who helped us in this study, did an amazing job coordinating groundwork to go to congregations, go to leaders of congregations, spent hours with them, to elicit the information. To ask about interfaith activity was even above and beyond what we could have done in this what I consider preliminary work. I'd love to see it done. As I said, this is part of my dream team, the donors out there, welcome.

The issues, the last question that I want to comment is about the inclusion or lack of Islamic mosques. The major reason is that we were limited in our thinking here about congregations housed in historic buildings, pre-1950. And most mosques in America are newer than that in those three cities. In Philadelphia, we couldn't find mosques that are in historic buildings. Hence, they were not in our sample. I mean, we couldn't even sample them.

It's not that we selected not to include them. We wish we could have. But it's not an American phenomenon pre-1950 to find many mosques. There are some in Detroit, but Detroit was not part of our sample. But it was not designed. Actually we lamented it. When we looked at the study and the finding, we said I wish we had some so we can be more inclusive.

MR. DIONNE: That's the next study is the new religious organizations and buildings and their economic contribution. Thank you for that.

Melissa, did you have a response to any of that?

MS. ROGERS: I'll just say a couple of quick words. I think, you know, while this study was focused on congregations, obviously our office recognizes and works with every day religiously affiliated organizations, like World Vision, the National

Association of Evangelicals, Salvation Army, and all the religiously affiliated ones with religious ties that are many more than just the congregations. There's this great constellation of work, and that includes mosques as well as Islamic Relief is I know a partner of yours in many endeavors. And I want thank you for your work on the refugee issues that you mentioned in particular.

The other thing just on interfaith activities, one of the things that President Obama started, and I'm glad Reverend Brenda Girton-Mitchell is here from the Department of Education because she has led so ably in this, is the Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge, which has brought together students from across the country and around the world to engage in interfaith service and then talk about what motivates them to serve. So it incorporates some of those elements that you were talking about. And so we have encouraged interfaith work as well as work of religious organizations working with members of their own faith, and happy to talk about that more.

And just want to recognize the work of my predecessor on this, as well, Joshua DuBois, who did terrific work on this and led this office during the first term of the Obama administration.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Bill?

MR. GALSTON: Well, a brief and, I fear, not completely reverent comment. One of the questioners talked about, and I quote, "moving our legislators closer to the divine." And given their recent performance I'd be satisfied if we could move them closer to the human. (Laughter)

MR. DIONNE: That may have been worth the whole panel. Reverend Mayor.

REVEREND GOODE: So often over the years at settings like this there are questions about what's not in the report. And I would simply say that I think that -- and I always say that if you want to include that in the report, go raise the money and add

it to it. (Laughter) That's not very nice and direct, but I wanted to say that.

But the main point I want to make is, even though that it is not included, I think we ought to think about the value of the report. Regardless of what was missed, what was said, what is in this report that we can take and help to do what we do on a day-to-day basis in a better way? And I think there's a lot of stuff in here, and I read it twice to make sure, that we can take and take some steps forward in the work that we're trying to do in engaging communities and cities and counties and government officials in the work that we do.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much. Second round of questions. Do we have hands here? Otherwise, I will go back, but I don't want to leave anyone behind.

By the way, I also want to thank every event that John and I have done, and maybe it's because you're so visible. Salvation Army people have been here and we're grateful that you're with us. It's a good reminder at this time of year when a lot of your people are out there.

Who do we -- oh, please, welcome. Another person who's done extraordinary work in this area over the years.

SPEAKER: (off mic) for a while, so I may be very stale. I'm wondering, there's sort of an elephant in the room or maybe a different animal, I'm not sure, about sort of what happens next. And I wonder if you would reflect what the iterations of changes when this policy really took off, which was in the Bush administration, not so much in the Clinton administration, and then really morphed. And there a lot of reforms that have been put in place since then that move in a direction that some might describe as more protective, more thoughtful, more research, more whatever you want to say. Where do you go with that as we come to January and beyond? Because there could be a really big shift and I'll let you take off on whatever pieces you want to -- the panel wants to reflect on that.

MR. DIONNE: Ah, the elephant. Who wants to -- can I start with Bill on

the elephant? If you don't mind my putting you on the spot. Since you're my colleague, you can beat me up for a week after this, if you want.

MR. GALSTON: Well, you know, a president who received 81 percent of the white evangelical vote, despite reasons that evangelicals could have found to vote otherwise, suggests to me that there is or ought to be a place for them and white Catholics and a number of other religious groupings who gave their strong support to the president-elect. And so I actually would be surprised if, given the nature of the coalition that brought Mr. Trump to the White House, if this entire line of activity and the institutional infrastructure that's been built to support it were scrapped. That is not my expectation. And I would expect, as a matter of fact, that this task would be assigned to someone who is known in the faith community broadly and respected.

So I admit to pessimism in other areas, but not necessarily this one. But there may be something I don't know.

MS. ROGERS: Yeah, I just wanted to say that as President Obama has explained, we are working very hard on making the transition as successful as it possibly can be. But just want to make clear for my own part, I can't comment on anything about the next administration, what they will pursue or prioritize in terms of their work in policymaking. Thanks.

MR. DIONNE: If my math is right, ask Melissa this question in 51 days and she will be freer to answer it. Ram?

MR. CNAAN: I can't answer your questions. I really don't know and part of me doesn't want to know. But I want to say that congregations have been there for hundreds of years. They changed and evolved in many ways. And I don't think that they will change in the next election and the after-election and the election after.

There's some evolving, there's some changes, but the facts are congregations are majors in the community, as Bill said, also, what we can't count and we don't need to count, is the important story here. They are strong, they're evolving,

and they will be there. What we did is just highlighting how important they are.

As (inaudible) futures of political issues, I leave to my political science colleagues. They know better than me.

MR. DIONNE: Reverend Goode.

REVEREND GOODE: The point which I would make is that I found over the years that congregations function much better in challenging and difficult times. And I would expect that we will have a lot of reasons to function better. (Laughter)

The second thing is that many of things that we do as congregations are local and county, city and county, and not federal or state.

MR. DIONNE: I'm glad you raised that question. I just want to say one brief thing, which is that the reforms that the Obama administration put in place with a really extraordinary consensus process that Melissa and others, Joshua and others, helped build, I think it would be a real shame if those were simply thrown out the window. And I'm just really hoping that that doesn't happen, even though the worries implicit in your question are worries I share.

We have one last voice. If you can be brief, I'll have one person answer because I want John to come up to say the final blessing or to be completely profane, if he prefers. Sir, welcome.

REVEREND McBRIDE: Good morning. My name's Michael McBride. I'm with the PICO Network.

MR. DIONNE: Oh, thanks for the work that PICO does.

REVEREND McBRIDE: Yes, Pastor Church in the Bay Area. We organize easily thousands of congregations across the country to address issues of inequality and economic injustice and mass incarceration and all kinds of things. In some of our training work with clergy we talk about three levels of engagement: charity, community or economic development, and then systemic and structural transformation. In our work charity often is grounded in our congregations through the personal income

or gifts of local members of a congregation. Economic development is usually access to capital, to be able to do community-based transformation. And the systemic and structural reform is about access to policy-making and advocacy.

Given the historic role that race and racial exclusion has played in the ability of local congregations to be able to amass all of those necessary streams of income and access and even self-determination, I'm wondering how this report takes into account or what are the recommendations that maybe subsequent reports can lift up that can actually really take seriously the historical role of exclusion by many, many congregations and people of color who actually comprise urban communities and are not able to have the self-sufficiency necessary for human flourishing?

MR. DIONNE: That's a great closing question. Who wants to take that? Ram, Mayor, Melissa?

MS. ROGERS: Well, I want to say thanks to Reverend Mike. He has been a great leader of PICO, which does such phenomenal work, and also a wonderful member of our Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

And for my part, I just want to say that the questions that Reverend Mike raised were very helpfully raised through a report that the Advisory Council did about poverty and inequality. And I think that he helped us, along with others on the council, to really focus on some very challenging and tough questions. So I commend that report to your reading because I think there's some real wisdom there and also some real challenges for us moving forward that we are still trying to grapple with. So I just wanted to say that word.

MR. DIONNE: As you were speaking, the word that came to mind is some things you can measure and then there are things that are priceless. And the work for justice is priceless, but thank you for your contribution.

I want to invite John up to do his closing remarks in any direction he chooses to take us. And just so I can say it now, bless you for this partnership we've had

for a long time.

MR. DILULIO: Well, thank you, E.J. You're, what can I say, a journalistic giant, a great good man, and a beloved friend, so I want to thank you. And I want to thank everyone here at The Brookings Institution for this incredible event, for pulling it together. But I also want to thank past Brookings leaders. You know, 20-some years ago, when faith-based did not so much draw fire as blank stares, Brookings was alone in willing to step up and take it on, dedicated to the proposition that you could be fact-based about faith-based. And that while, you know, faith might be defined as hope in the unseen, that you could have reasons for objective hope, and I think Brookings has sustained that.

And with this study released today by Ram showing the congregations measured in his early pioneering studies with Partners for Sacred Places, social services, $150,000 per congregation per year, and now with his broader measure -- imperfect though it may be -- 1.7 million per congregation.

That's a very important finding, especially in our place in time. So on behalf of Penn and the Program for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, I want to thank E.J. and everyone at Brookings.

I also want to thank Bob Jaeger, the pioneering founding president and director of Partners for Sacred Places, without which none of this work would have gone forward without Bob's incredible vision and the work of Tuomi Forrest. Where is Tuomi? There's Tuomi. He just keeps getting younger all the time. Tuomi Forrest and Rachel Hildebrandt, who really, you know, worked on this, despite some obstreperous board members along the way who were very pesky and bothersome, I want to thank them as well.

I want to thank Reverend Dr. Mayor Goode, who is a mentor and really an historic and heroic figure in church and state, and Church and State.

And I want to thank Dr. Ram Cnaan. Here we have an Israeli-born

professor of -- I think he's an Italian plumber from South Philadelphia, but let's put that aside for now. (Laughter) This is a complete -- but, you know, a self-described, as you heard, agnostic, who over decades now his seminal work has revolutionized our understanding of congregations and religious organizations in America, and really, truly the indispensable scholar. So I want to thank Ram.

I want to thank Dr. William Galston, who is unfailingly -- his judgment is unfailingly good. I know whenever I disagree at all with Bill Galston that I am wrong. (Laughter) And it usually takes me five to seven years to catch up, but he is a true public servant and public intellectual. And I want to thank him so much for his engagement on this report, but on so much else over so many years, as well.

But I guess I should say last but not least I want to thank Director Dr. Melissa Rogers. You know, it's a footnote to a footnote of ancient history, but my last event when I had the White House job that she now has was the release of a report here at Brookings in which she served on the panel.

The only difference is she's done a really great job and building on the incredible work of Reverend Joshua DuBois. I just want to thank her for being such an inspiration to so many of us over the last four years. Very difficult, trying times, very difficult in this space of church and state, and yet her leadership and what the Obama administration has done I think is truly remarkable.

So Benjamin Franklin, you know, Penn is proudly nonsectarian, but our founder is Benjamin Franklin. I call it Saint Ben's. Nobody's gone along with that at Penn so far; I'm working on it. But he had a great motto that he actually used for the Library Company of Philadelphia. And that motto is, "To pour forth benefits for the common good is divine."

"To pour forth benefits for the common good is divine." And so it is and so I thank you. (Applause)

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