

PREFACE

This summative report reflects the work of a special project of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government. Formed in 2002 with a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to the Research Foundation of the State University of New York, the Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy was created to engage and inform government, religious and civic leaders about the role of faith-based organizations in our social welfare system by means of nonpartisan, evidence-based discussions on the potential and pitfalls of such involvement. The Roundtable's charge was to increase awareness among key stakeholders, including policy makers, religious and civic leaders, and the media, of the critical issues related to faith-based social service programs by means of in-depth analysis and discussion based on the best social service science, legal and policy research.

Our purpose was to serve as the preeminent source of expert, unbiased information on policy and legal developments concerning the involvement of faith-based organizations in social services. We drew on a wide range of experts from government, civic, religious and research organizations, and sought through our publications and events to report and explain policy and legal developments; better define and measure the character of faith-based social services; gauge private and public sector support for their work; and provide fact-based assessments of their comparative effectiveness.

We were honored to do this work and enormously grateful for the support of The Pew Charitable Trusts in making the project possible. Luis Lugo directed these efforts for The Trusts when the project began, before taking the helm of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, where his vision has continued to shape our work. Our program officer at The Trusts, Julie Sulc, has graciously and generously guided this project from its inception, and we benefited enormously from her insights and encouragement. Quite simply, she is the very model of a foundation officer. Stephanie Boddie joined the Forum as our project wound down, and we were grateful to work with her on transition and publication of this report.

I am indebted to the co-director of the Rockefeller Institute of Government, Richard Nathan, for his leadership on this project. Our institutional partners at George Washington University School of Law – Professors Ira C. Lupu and Robert Tuttle – led the project's work in tracking and explaining legal developments. They were enormously insightful and patient guides, and we were greatly privileged to work with them. We were equally privileged to find such talented people as Claire Hughes and Anne Farris, whose intrepid reporting and interviewing skills did so much to cover and tell this story. I am no less grateful to Patricia Cadrette and Lisa Montiel, my Rockefeller Institute compatriots, for their dedication, grace and good humor.

The contributions and efforts of my colleagues on the Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy are fully reflected in this report. Any shortcomings or errors are mine. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of The Pew Charitable Trusts or those of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government.