

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 22, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to thank you for maintaining the policies that allow faith-based government contractors to consider religious criteria in their employment decisions. We urge you to continue preserving policies that uphold this crucial freedom, as such policies accurately reflect our nation's core value of protecting religious liberty and affirming the significant contribution of faith-based organizations to our society.

It is our understanding that you recently received two letters regarding religious hiring rights of faith-based government contractors—one from a group of faith-based organizations and religious leaders supporting the current policies; and the other from a coalition of groups urging you to overturn these freedoms. We support the faith-based organizations and religious leaders in calling for the preservation of existing policies that allow faith-based organizations that perform contract work for the federal government to consider religious criteria in their employment decisions.

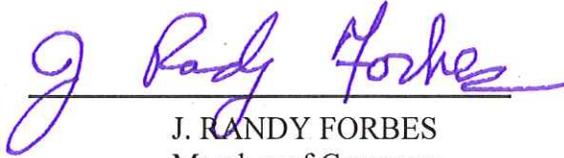
President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13279 in 2002 to reconcile federal contracting rules with the existing Title VII religious hiring provisions, which allow faith-based organizations to take religion into account when making employment decisions. Executive Order 13279 ensures that faith-based organizations are not precluded from performing contract work for the federal government for merely exercising their religious hiring rights permitted under Title VII.

Allowing faith-based organizations to compete for federal government contracts enlarges the pool of candidates with whom the government can conduct business, fostering competition for contracts and thereby helping to drive down costs borne by the government. Current policy ensures that all eligible organizations—including faith-based organizations—are allowed to compete, and is consistent with our nation's commitment of protecting civil rights by fostering an environment of inclusion and diversity. Faith-based organizations regularly consider religious criteria when hiring to preserve their religious identity. Forcing these organizations to choose between preserving their religious identity and interacting with the government would run contrary to our nation's core values of religious freedom.

A crucial aspect of America's religious freedom is the right of like-minded individuals to unify in service to their community, guided by their religious beliefs. It is imperative that we preserve the ability of these valuable contributors to society to offer assistance to the federal

government while simultaneously preserving their religious identity. We respectfully urge that you maintain current policies that protect religious hiring rights of faith-based government contractors, and look forward to hearing from you regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of J. Randy Forbes in blue ink, written over a horizontal line.

J. RANDY FORBES
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Mike McIntyre in blue ink, written over a horizontal line.

MIKE MCINTYRE
Member of Congress