

Harris' Religious Liberty Record

On February 14, 2021, Biden signed an executive order reestablishing the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. The Biden-Harris administration claims that this office is intended to promote partnerships between the White House and religious and secular organizations to better serve people in need. These accomplishments fall into eight categories: safeguarding the right to practice faith without fear and other aspects of religious freedom; expanding opportunity; responding to disasters; helping Americans with mental health and substance use problems and preventing suicide; improving maternal and child health and addressing hunger and nutrition; welcoming refugees, including Ukrainians and Afghan allies, and new Americans; protecting the environment; and promoting protection and recovery from COVID-19.

Safeguarding the right to practice faith without fear and other aspects of religious freedom

In response to the war between Israel and Hamas, the Biden-Harris administration has undertaken several programs to protect Jewish and Muslim communities in the United States.

The Biden-Harris administration hosted the first-ever White House United We Stand Summit on countering hate-motivated violence. Although the summit briefly included discussions about attacks on houses of worship, its focus was more on discrimination against minorities and LGBT individuals.

Biden announced the establishment of a new interagency policy committee (IPC), led by Domestic Policy Council and National Security Council staff, to increase and better coordinate efforts to counter antisemitism, Islamophobia, and related forms of discrimination and bias in our country. As its first order of business, the President directed the IPC to develop a national strategy to counter antisemitism. Second Gentleman of the United States Douglas Emhoff, Ambassador Susan Rice, Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, and Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt held a roundtable meeting with diverse Jewish stakeholders on the alarming spike in anti-Semitism in the United States.

Through the Protecting Places of Worship Interagency Policy Committee (IPC), the Biden-Harris administration coordinated efforts to support the safety and security of places of worship. On the tenth anniversary of the attack on the Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, the IPC announced an initial set of steps to protect places of worship and congregants, and IPC leaders participated in memorial events at the Sikh Temple. Under the IPC's leadership, products such as the Threats Against Houses of Worship Highlight the Importance of Religious Community Outreach were updated, the first Protecting Places of Worship Week of Action was held, and a network promoting peer-to-peer learning for faith leaders launched.

In Fiscal Year 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration implemented a nearly 40% increase in funding – from \$180 million to \$250 million – in the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP), which provides support for increasing the physical security of nonprofit organizations, including houses of worship and other religious affiliated entities. In his Fiscal Year 2023 budget proposal, President Biden called for \$360 million for this program. The omnibus spending package for fiscal year 2023 funded this program at \$304 million. Ultimately, the administration provided technical assistance to more than 10,000 faith-based and community leaders on taking action to protect places of worship, including by providing information on the Non-Profit Security Grant Program and sharing the Mitigating Attacks on Places of Worship publication. This included "diverse faith leaders" and provided protection to Tribal Nations and their citizens, including the President's designation of the Camp Hale – Continental Divide National Monument, the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monuments, and an interagency Sacred Sites Memorandum of Understanding Protected places sacred that creates a framework through which agencies can better protect Tribal sacred sites.

The Biden-Harris administration reestablished the Faith-Based Security Advisory Council, which offers advice and recommendations to the DHS Secretary on matters related to protecting houses of worship, preparedness, and enhanced coordination with the faith community.

The Biden-Harris administration advanced new rules which it claimed protected the religious liberty protections for beneficiaries of federally funded social services, such as job training and job search assistance, academic enrichment opportunities, and housing services. The new rules require federal grantees that administer social service programs with the federal government to adhere to new regulations. In reality, this created new burdens for faith-based providers and reversed key reforms by the Trump administration that made it easier for faith-based providers to compete for federal grants.

The Biden-Harris administration held listening sessions with Muslim, Jewish, and other faith-based, civil rights, and educational organizations on concerns related to anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and related forms of discrimination and bias. Additionally, the administration promoted a new Fact Sheet: Protecting Students from Discrimination Based on Shared Ancestry or Ethnic Characteristics, which describes ways this protection covers students who are or are perceived to be Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, or of another religious group. Further, the administration hosted a webinar on how pre-K-12 schools can prevent and address bullying against students because of their actual or perceived religious affiliation.

Expanding opportunity

The Biden-Harris Administration launched the Thriving Communities Program, a program aimed at ensuring that disadvantaged communities have the technical tools and organizational capacity to compete for federal aid and deliver quality infrastructure projects that enable neighborhoods to thrive. As part of this program, direct support is provided to governmental, non-profit, philanthropic, neighborhood and faith-based organizations to collectively plan for, design, and deliver community-driven transportation projects.

The Biden-Harris administration partnered with faith and community leaders to enroll people in eligible households in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The ACP helps ensure that eligible households can afford the high-speed internet and devices such as computers, smartphones and tablets.

The Biden-Harris administration fostered partnerships among businesses, community-based organizations, and faith leaders through roundtables in all 50 states to promote job creation, economic growth, and equity at the local level. Lists of Department of Commerce programs and services relevant to communities' needs were shared at these roundtables, including information on small business loans, export promotion assistance, climate resilience support, and increased community access to data and technology.

The Biden-Harris administration met with over 150 faith-based and community organizations seeking to partner with USAID.

The Biden-Harris Administration conducted capacity-building and grant-writing trainings for faith-based and neighborhood organizations in cities such Tallahassee, Florida; Atlanta, Georgia; and Detroit, Michigan.

Responding to disasters

Following the shootings at Tops supermarket in East Buffalo and Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, Biden-Harris staffers worked with local faith and neighborhood leaders on responding to needs and developed guides to relevant federal resources for these leaders. Some of the assistance provided included offering over 1,000 residents access to resources such as school supplies, nutritious food, mental and behavioral health resources, assistance for substance use disorders, and COVID-19 vaccinations. Likewise, the Biden-Harris administration's faith-based office claims it provided assistance, including the Resource Guide for LGBTQ+ Organizations and Service Providers, following the shooting at Club Q in Colorado Springs. Additionally, they provided a fact sheet with resources for Asian-American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders communities in the aftermath of mass violence, including the despicable attacks in Monterey Park and Half Moon Bay, California.

The Biden-Harris administration provided training for faith and community leaders on preventing human trafficking in disasters and updated the Faith-Based Community Leaders Awareness Guide in English and Spanish.

Helping people struggling with mental health and substance use problems and preventing suicide

The Biden-Harris administration provided training to 45,000 faith and community leaders on the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and on emergency mental health services, created a Youth Mental Health Toolkit, developed and shared a PSA featuring African American clergy, and updated the Practical Toolkit for Preventing Drug Overdose and Supporting Recovery in Faith and Community Settings and translated the toolkit into Spanish.

The Biden-Harris administration hosted fourteen suicide prevention webinars for faith-based and community organizations that focused on the Department of Veterans Affairs S.A.V.E. training.

The Biden-Harris Administration offered technical assistance during Mental Health Awareness Month to thousands of faith and community leaders from rural and underserved communities on the resources available to address behavioral health, farm stress, and prevent suicide.

Improving maternal and child health and addressing hunger and nutrition

The Biden-Harris administration held three regional events in Philadelphia, Houston, and New York City to highlight ways faith and community leaders can get involved in addressing concerns about maternal and child health.

The Biden-Harris administration hosted a series of webinars on workplace protections for new and expecting mothers. Workers, worker advocates, employers, and other stakeholders were provided with information on federal laws that protect pregnant workers from discrimination, provide time off for the birth or adoption of a child, and ensure nursing workers can take breaks to pump breast milk while at work.

The Biden-Harris administration included community and faith-based organizations in the first White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in over 50 years and in the development and implementation of the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health.

The Biden-Harris administration moved to make kosher and halal foods more available to nutrition assistance customers, including by engaging with faith institutions, food banks, and other external stakeholders.

Welcoming refugees, including Ukrainians and Afghan allies, and new Americans

The Biden-Harris administration supported the launch of the Welcome Corps by connecting faith and community leaders with this new service opportunity for Americans to welcome refugees. Together, sponsor groups welcome refugee newcomers by securing and preparing initial housing, greeting refugee newcomers at the airport, enrolling children in school, and helping adults find employment.

In coordination with Operation Allies Welcome, the Biden-Harris administration continued a webinar series for faith and neighborhood organizations on supporting the resettlement of Afghan allies in the United States.

The Biden-Harris administration partnered with community and faith leaders in support of Uniting for Ukraine, an innovative approach to provide a safe and orderly process for displaced Ukrainians who have been impacted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine to come to the United States with the support of a sponsor. Also, Biden sent Easter greetings to Ukrainian American Christians, giving thanks for the extraordinary unity and resolve we are seeing around the world in support of Ukrainians and promising to continue to stand with the people of a free and democratic Ukraine.

The Biden-Harris administration connected leaders of secular and religious nonprofit organizations with the Task Force on New Americans, a body that coordinates the federal government's efforts to ensure that lawfully present immigrants, including refugees, receive the support they need.

Protecting the environment

On August 13, 2024, the Biden-Harris White House hosted a meeting of more than a dozen faith leaders to discuss how faith-based organizations can benefit from and support the administration's climate agenda. Officials highlighted that houses of worship are eligible to use Direct Pay, a provision of the Inflation Reduction Act that helps tax-exempt entities use federal clean energy tax incentives by issuing payments in equal value to tax credits. This is to encourage nonprofits to proactively pursue clean energy projects.

The Biden-Harris administration made it easier and more efficient for congregations to reduce pollution, including launching a new webpage featuring 18 EPA programs with tools and resources for congregations, updating the ENERGY STAR Action Workbook for Congregations, and facilitating webinars with nonprofit partners on Inflation Reduction Act-funded grants through the Efficiency Materials Pilot Program for Nonprofits.

The Biden-Harris administration convened over 400 faith and community leaders to foster dialogue and partnerships on climate smart agriculture, climate smart commodities, and ways to help historically underserved communities.

Promoting protection and recovery from COVID-19

As part of a "Year of Action" working with civil society on COVID-19 response efforts, USAID awarded \$1.5 million in technical support and capacity-strengthening services to three USAID Missions to implement activities that engage and strengthen the capacity of local faith-based and community organizations to assist in COVID-19 response.

The Biden-Harris administration connected faith and community-based organizations with two initiatives to promote academic recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis: The National Partnership for Student Success (a public-private partnership with AmeriCorps and the Department of Education) to recruit, screen, train, support, and engage an additional 250,000 caring adults in roles serving as tutors, mentors, student success coaches, wraparound service coordinators, and post-secondary transition coaches; and the Engage Every Student Initiative, which is working to ensure that every student who wants a spot in a high-quality out-of-school-time program has one.

In 2022, AmeriCorps invested in thousands of nonprofit, faith, and community-based organizations across the nation addressing COVID-19 pandemic response, economic opportunity, and environmental conservation, among other critical needs. This includes a \$580 million investment through the AmeriCorps State and National program, the largest investment in agency history supported by AmeriCorps' historic \$1 billion American Rescue Plan investment from the Biden-Harris Administration.