



# **Of Little Faith: The Politics of George W. Bush's Faith-Based Initiatives (Religion and Politics series)**

*Amy E. Black*

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George W. Bush had planned to swear his oath of office with his hand on the Masonic Bible used by both his father and George Washington, however, due to the inclement weather, a family Bible was substituted. Almost immediately on taking office, President Bush made passage of "faith-based initiatives" the government funding of religious charitable groups a legislative priority. However, "inclement" weather storm-tossed his hopes for faith-based initiatives as well.

What happened? Why did these initiatives, which began with such vigor and support from a popular president, fail? And what does this say about the future role of religious faith in American public life? Amy Black, Douglas Koopman, and David Ryden—all prominent political scientists—utilize a framework that takes the issue through all three branches of government and analyzes it through three very specific lenses: a public policy lens, a political party lens, and a lens of religion in the public square.

Drawing on dozens of interviews with key figures in Washington, the authors tell a compelling story, revealing the evolution of the Bush faith-based strategy from his campaign for the presidency through congressional votes to the present. They show how political rhetoric, infighting, and poor communication shipwrecked Bush's efforts to fundamentally alter the way government might conduct social services. The authors demonstrate the lessons learned, and propose a more fruitful, effective way to go about such initiatives in the future.

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