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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Backs Faith-Based Initiatives at Republican Governors Association Conference

Governor Christie Whitman today addressed her colleagues at the Republican Governors Association Conference in Carlsbad, California about the important role that faith-based initiatives can play, with the support of a responsible government, in serving social needs.

Taking New Jersey as an example, Gov. Whitman said, "Our Faith-Based Community Development Initiative is premised on a simple fact: government has a responsibility to serve social needs. Sometimes - indeed many times - members of churches, synagogues and mosques have come up with a creative program that fills a vital need right within the community."

As the Governor explained, faith-based groups know the people in a neighborhood better than government ever could - or even should - know them, and they are a central part of the community. New Jersey's Faith-Based Initiative has invested over \$5 million in more than 60 neighborhood organizations.

"It's in everyone's interest, including state government's, that we support these groups and help them expand their outreach - whether it's after-school programs, or care for senior citizens, or special housing, or job training," continued Gov. Whitman.

The Governor cited several groups in New Jersey that have received support thanks to the state's Faith-Based Community Development Initiative. For instance, she spoke about Elijah's Promise in New Brunswick, which was initially begun to serve daily meals for free to the poor and the elderly but was able to expand and create a catering business and an entrepreneurial program.

After her remarks, Gov. Whitman introduced New Jersey Secretary of State - the Reverend DeForest B. Soaries, Jr. - who she was praised for his work in faith-based initiatives for nearly a decade as senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset.

"To hear Rev. Soaries talk about the success of his church is to understand just how much a faith community can achieve - especially when government is wise enough to support instead of supplant what they're doing," concluded Gov. Whitman.

