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Any room for trade-offs in CCHD? Leaders say no.

by Jerry Filteau

NCR Today

WASHINGTON -- At a teleconference this morning introducing a review report on the funding rules of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, a reporter asked what happens if CCHD faces a "hard choice" or trade-off that involves a funding request for a valuable project fully in accord with CCHD principles, but the group making the request is in conflict with church teaching in some other area unrelated to that grant request.

"Actually, that's not a hard choice," said John Carr, executive director of the U.S. bishops' Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development. "If good work is being done but it's being done by a group that acts in conflict with Catholic teaching, social, moral teaching, then they can't have CCHD money."

"That has been the policy. That is the policy," added Carr, whose department includes the staff of CCHD. "What will be in place is a whole new set of tools to make sure that doesn't happen -- a different grant agreement, a different application, a different pre-application."

"In addition CCHD, as you know from the report, is going to have a staff position that's going to focus on the Catholic identity of CCHD and the mission of CCHD. We will have an ongoing regular relationship with one or more moral theologians who can help us assess whether there is such a conflict in any grant request."

CCHD is also forming a review board that will look at particularly complicated issues that may arise and give the bishops "an outside view of this," he said.

"We have to be very direct. A group which may do nice work in housing but advocates same-sex marriage or federal funding for abortion is ineligible for CCHD funds, and if they were to engage in that activity they wouldn't get it [funding] or would be cut off."

“Those are not hard trade-offs,” Carr said. “Certainly there are many groups that do impressive work in a variety of areas. But they’re not eligible for CCHD funding if they also do things which conflict with our teaching.”

“We believe that it is exactly the same principles of human life and dignity, of the priority for the poor and vulnerable, that lead the church to stand with the poor, that require us to defend the unborn and to oppose efforts to redefine marriage. These are not administrative burdens – they’re an expression of who we are and what we believe.”

Bishop Roger Morin of Biloxi, Miss., chairman of the bishops’ Subcommittee on the CCHD, agreed.

“There is no such thing as a trade-off,” he said. “You either are in with and totally committed to what it is that the church teaches and preaches socially and morally, or you’re not in and you’re not eligible for funding.”

[Jerry Filteau is NCR Washington correspondent.]

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