

COME LET US REASON TOGETHER: A GOVERNING AGENDA TO END THE CULTURE WARS

January 2009

Dear President Obama and Congressional Leaders of Both Parties:

For the last few decades, through both Democratic and Republican administrations, America has been polarized by an angry culture war, fought over such divisive issues as abortion and gay rights. More recently, the issues of torture and immigration have also divided Americans. These fights have been marked by sincere passion and principles on the one hand, but also by stridency and lack of respect for the opposing sides' motives and beliefs on the other.

We write to you from two traditionally warring camps, one evangelical and one progressive, with a shared vision and a plan for ending the culture wars. Our vision is not born of surrender but a renewed sense of possibility and mutual purpose. This new path allows the country to move forward together without demanding that either side compromise its core principles.

The four common ground policies contained in the agenda below represent the fruits of a two-year process of deliberation, governed by the spirit of civility from the biblical injunction, "Come let us reason together."

The "Come Let Us Reason Together" Agenda includes the following policies:

- **Reducing abortions through common ground policies.** We agree on a goal of reducing abortions in America through policies that address the circumstances that lead to abortion: preventing unintended pregnancies, supporting pregnant women and new families, and increasing support for adoption.
- **Protecting the rights of gay and lesbian people to earn a living.** Based on a common commitment to fairness and the Golden Rule, we support a policy that makes it illegal to fire, refuse to hire, or refuse to promote employees based on their sexual orientation. We also believe that there must be a clear exemption for faith-based employers.
- **Renouncing torture.** We agree that the use of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment against prisoners is immoral, unwise, and un-American.
- **Creating secure and comprehensive immigration reform.** We agree that we need secure, compassionate, and comprehensive immigration reform. We support policies that create an earned path to citizenship and protect families, while securing our borders and treating American taxpayers fairly.

There are rare opportunities in each generation when the wind shifts and the spirit moves, when people of good will can act together for real change. We believe we are standing at such a moment.

Mr. President and congressional leaders, you can model a new type of leadership. You can help take us to a time of gathering—rather than throwing—stones. We ask that you join us in making this "Come Let Us Reason Together" Agenda a hallmark of your administration and Congress.

With great hope for the future,

The Come Let Us Reason Together Leadership Team:

- Rachel Laser, *Director of the Culture Program for Third Way;*
- Dr. Robert P. Jones, *Visiting Fellow at Third Way and President of Public Religion Research;*
- Dr. David Gushee, *Professor at Mercer University and President of Evangelicals for Human Rights;*
- Rev. Dr. Joel Hunter, *Senior Pastor at Northland, A Church Distributed;*
- Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, *President of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference;*
- Dr. Ronald J. Sider, *President of Evangelicals for Social Action;*
- Katie Paris, *Director of Communications Strategy for Faith in Public Life*