



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senator Malcolm A. Smith And Clergy From Around NY Kick-off My Community And US Consultation

MALCOLM A. SMITH May 6, 2011

(Hollis, NY)- Senator Malcolm A. Smith (D-Hollis) has teamed up with clergy from around NYC and Long Island to host the first *My Community And Us Consultation*.

My Community and Us is a new initiative to **Redesign and Redefine the Relationship** between faith-based organizations, corporate America, government and private foundations to benefit communities around New York. By participating in this consultation participants are committing to a four-part series concluding with a **Consultation Graduation**. The other three consultations will be held August 5th, 2011, November 4th, 2011 and February 3rd, 2012.

Faith-based organizations in their present form are in jeopardy. Rising government deficits and the national economic downturn have negatively impacted public and private aid to local programs. As government redesigns itself, it is not clear what the impact will be to the most vulnerable among us, who more than ever need the assistance of the faith-based community.

“After consulting with clergy members from all around the City, we felt that it was imperative to bring first-hand information and resources that will help build organizations’ capacity and ability to reach those most in need,” said Senator Smith. “Today’s consultation is no ordinary program. We have asked the heads of City, State and Federal agencies to lead panel discussions on topics ranging from immigration to funding an after-school program. In addition, workshops are also being held on Legal Preparedness, Church Financing and Funding Resources for Non-Profit Organizations. This program is open not only to churches City-wide but to faith-based organizations as well.”

Dr. Joseph Mattera, overseeing Bishop of Christ Covenant Coalition and Chair of the *My Community And Us* Steering Committee said: “With the economic downturn and state budget cuts, the challenges of at risk communities are mounting and can only be ameliorated by innovative strategies and strategic collaboration. My Community And Us, initiated by Senator Malcolm Smith, is a unique event that aspires to do just that by connecting key leaders in the faith and civic arena who have a common goal of elevating the quality of life for our great city! It may become the most significant event of its kind.”

Dennis Walcott, Chancellor, New York City Department of Education said: “The faith-based community plays a vital role in serving our City, including our students and school communities. The Department of Education is committed to building strong partnerships with clergy members and faith communities as

they seek to support our local schools and offer programs that encourage our students' development and growth. I'm grateful to Senator Smith for bringing together such a diverse group of stakeholders to help forge these critical partnerships.”

Chung-Wha Hong, Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition said: “I am happy to be participating in the My Community and Us Initiative. Building partnerships between faith-based organizations, business, government, and private foundations is critical to revitalizing New York. As a participant, I look forward to building upon these partnerships to benefit New York’s diverse communities.”

Bishop Hector Bonano, of the Fellowship of Council Bishops said: “This consultation will bridge the gap between churches and government agencies. I applaud Senator Smith for thinking outside the box and organizing this event.”

Rev. Philip Craig, of The Greater Allen Cathedral of New York said: “***My Community and Us*** program is a necessity for today's society. Bringing Government and Church together takes us back to the foundation in which this great country was built on with the words In God we trust. When we build the church, we develop a better community which creates a greater people who become products of the environment.”

Rev. Michel Faulkner, of the New Horizon Church in Harlem said: “For too long the community has been looking to the Government as if they have enough money to solve all their problems and they do not. I am proud to work with Government leaders like Senator Malcolm Smith to look for creative ways to try to reinvent or improve the way Government does business. I think he is serious about changing the culture in Albany by making us partners in this endeavor.”

Adolfo Carrión, Regional Director, U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) said: “The United States has a long and rich history of community development by faith institutions. Many of our universities and health care institutions began as efforts by neighborhood faith leaders. We are committed to building a strong partnership between HUD and communities of faith to build sustainable, economically competitive, and opportunity-rich places.”

“We want participants in this consultation to be fully engaged. This program is similar to a college seminar. Today is just the beginning. The following three consultations will be extensions of what they learned today. We are also pairing all of the participants with Consultation Mentors. The mentors will serve as liaisons between City, State and Federal agencies and the churches or faith-based organizations,” said Senator Smith.

Rev. Mullery Jean-Pierre, of the Beraca Baptist Church said: “WOW! ***My Community & Us***' opening day was a home run for all communities in NYC. Over 80 movers and shakers from the city and clergy came together to begin to redefine, redesign and realign their relationships. A one year commitment translates into a Grand Slam for our communities.”

Rev. John Scott, of the Empire Baptist Missionary Convention said: “Programs like ***My Community And Us*** are essential to churches and faith-based organizations. I applaud Senator Smith for his vision and

leadership in pulling this event together.”

Mark L. Williams, of the Bethel Gospel Assembly of Harlem: “The consultation offered an excellent opportunity for churches to move beyond the confines of traditional activism models and move toward activation models to address community issues. Senator Smith and Bishop Mattera provide a forum of discussion that facilitated a voice for churches in the trench.”

Rev. David Cockfield, of Battalion Pentecostal Assembly, Inc. said: “I am delighted to be a part of such an important, life-changing program. This consultation was truly a model of a bipartisan effort between religious and state concerns.”

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**Malcolm A. Smith is the New York State Senate Immediate Past President Pro Tempore (2008-10).
He currently serves as Secretary of the NYS Democratic Conference and ranking member on the
Banking Committee.**