

## **Faithful, Engaged, and Divergent:**

### **A Comparative Portrait of Conservative and Progressive Religious Activists in the 2008 Election and Beyond**

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## Executive Summary

The 2009 Religious Activist Surveys were conducted by the Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron in partnership with Public Religion Research. These first ever comparative surveys of conservative and progressive religious activists find them to be faithful, engaged, and divergent.

### ***Key findings include:***

***Religion.*** Conservative and progressive religious activists are deeply religious, but have strikingly different religious profiles.

In terms of religious affiliation, conservative activists are almost exclusively Christian, whereas progressive activists are more diverse. Among conservative activists, 54% identify as evangelical Protestant, 35% as Roman Catholic, and 9% with Mainline Protestantism. Among progressive activists, 44% identify as Mainline Protestants; 17% as Roman Catholics; 10% as evangelical Protestants; 12% as interfaith, mixed faith, or Unitarian; 6% Jewish; and 8% who have no formal religious affiliation or identify as formerly affiliated.

In terms of beliefs, conservative and progressive religious activists have strikingly different beliefs about scripture. Nearly half of conservatives (48%) view scripture as the literal word of God, a view held by only 3% of progressives.

In terms of practices, both groups of activists report religion is important in their lives at higher levels than the public at large. Among the conservative religious activists, 96% say religion is extremely or very important in their lives; among the progressive activists, that figure is 74%; among the public, it is 62%.

***Issue priorities.*** Conservative and progressive religious activists have strikingly different issue priorities. A majority of conservative religious activists gave priority to abortion and same-sex marriage, while progressive religious activists gave priority to a number of issues, including economic justice, the environment, and peace. Conservative religious activists overwhelmingly identify abortion (83%) and same-sex marriage (65%) as most important priorities among a set of eight issue areas. Fewer than 10% of progressive religious activists call those “most important” issues. Highest priorities for progressive activists are poverty (74%), health care (67%), environment (56%), jobs/economy (48%), and the Iraq war (45%).

***Issue positions.*** Conservative and progressive religious activists have sharply different views on cultural, foreign policy, and economic issues.

**Abortion.** Conservative religious activists are nearly universally opposed to legalized abortion: 95% say either that abortion should be illegal in all cases (60%) or most cases (35%). In sharp contrast, 80% of progressive religious activists say abortion should be legal in all (26%) or most (54%) cases.

**Gay and Lesbian Issues.** On the issue of same-sex marriage, conservatives overwhelmingly oppose (82%) both same-sex marriage and civil unions, while nearly 6-in-10 (59%) progressives support same-sex marriage, and another third support civil unions.

**Health Care.** Only 6% of conservative religious activists agree that the U.S. should have comprehensive national health insurance even if it resulted in fewer choices for patients, compared to nearly 8-in-10 (78%) progressive activists who agree.

**Environment.** Only 13% of conservative activists agree that more environmental protection is needed even if it raises prices or costs jobs, compared to nearly 9-in-10 (87%) progressive activists who agree.

**Torture.** A significant majority of conservative religious activists say torture can often (25%) or sometimes (36%) be justified. Only 5% of progressive religious activists take either of those positions, with 79% saying torture can never be justified.

**Iraq War.** Conservative religious activists strongly back the war in Iraq, with an overwhelming majority saying it was either completely (35%) or probably (48%) justified. Progressive religious activists are staunchly opposed, with 80% saying it was completely unjustified and 13% saying it was probably unjustified. The two groups are also mirror images of each other on the so-called “Bush doctrine” of preemptive military action, with about three-quarters of conservatives supporting it and nearly the same proportion of progressive activists in opposition.

**Role of Government and Taxes.** Sixty-eight percent of progressive religious activists believe government should increase spending and provide more services; 89% say tax cuts should be directed toward lower income people. By even larger margins, conservative religious activists believe that government should provide fewer services and cut spending (86%). Sixty-one percent back tax cuts targeted at upper-income individuals.

**Politics and the 2008 election.** In 2008, Barack Obama was the solid favorite among progressive religious activists. Conservative religious activists initially were divided but eventually rallied to McCain.

Among progressive activists, 58% say Obama was their first choice in the Democratic primary, and 93% supported him in the general election. Conservative activists were initially more split among GOP contenders, with 28% calling Mike Huckabee their top choice, with Romney getting 22% and McCain 17%. In the general election, however, 90% report voting for McCain.

Both religious activist groups cite faith as an important factor in their voting decision, but conservative activists were more likely to say that their faith was the most important factor. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of the conservative activists say their faith was the most important factor in deciding how to vote in 2008, and another 29% say their faith was as important as other factors. Among progressive activists, 1-in-5 say faith was the most important factor, and 41% report that faith was as important as other factors in deciding who to support in the election.

***Political engagement in 2008.*** Conservative and progressive religious activists report relatively similar levels of participation in traditional campaign activities such as making campaign donations or signing petitions. However, progressive religious activists were much more likely to have participated in a range of online campaign activities. Also, while both groups were active in the presidential campaigns, conservative activists report being somewhat more active than progressives in congressional campaigns (46% vs 41%), statewide campaigns (41% vs. 37%), and ballot issues (42% vs. 34%).

***Religion in public life.*** Conservative and progressive religious activists both support a role for religion in public life, but the groups have strongly diverging views of church-state separation. Eighty-one percent of progressive religious activists say the U.S. “should maintain a strict separation of church and state,” a position taken by only 21% of conservative activists. Nearly all conservative activists believe America was founded as a Christian nation, a view shared by only 37% progressive activists.

More than two-thirds of conservative religious activists say there was not enough public expression of faith and prayer by political leaders during the 2008 election, compared to only 5% of progressive religious activists. Among progressive activists, a majority (52%) say the amount of religious expression by political leaders in 2008 was about right.

*In terms of future public engagement,* both conservative and progressive activists strongly emphasized the importance of being publicly visible and politically active. Conservative activists were more likely to emphasize the importance of prayer, whereas progressive activists were more likely to emphasize the importance of civility, pluralism, and social justice.



## INTRODUCTION

In recent times, much has been written about faith-based politics in the United States, and religious activists are typically at the center of such stories. Activists are literally where the action is in politics—the people who write checks, stuff envelopes, knock on doors, blog, and demonstrate on behalf of causes deeply rooted in their religious values.

Conservative religious activists, sometimes referred to as the “religious right” or the “Christian conservative movement,” are better known. They have become a staple of national politics in the last three decades, opposing same-sex marriage and abortion, and seeking to protect traditional moral values. These activists represent a long history of political action, dating back to the prohibition and anti-evolution movements in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

More recently, progressive religious activists, sometimes referred to as the “religious left” or the “progressive religious movement,” have received renewed attention. They have become more visible and organized in the last several years, working for social justice and peace, and seeking to protect the environment. These activists also represent a long history of faith-based political activism, including playing integral roles in the civil rights and labor movements.

This report provides a unique look at contemporary progressive and conservative religious activists in the United States based on a 2009 mail survey of some 3,000 activists (for details on survey methodology, see Appendix A).<sup>1</sup> The report covers the religious and demographic characteristics of these activists as well as issue priorities, issue positions, theological orientations, and level and type of political engagement. The first part of the report compares progressive and conservative activists to each other, and then turns to more in-depth profiles of each group.

Recent surveys suggest that these religious progressives and conservatives could speak to—and for—a significant number of religious people in the political process. For example, the 2008 National Survey of Religion and Politics found that roughly 18% of the adult population shared the modernist religious perspectives that characterize many progressive activists (approximately 38 million people), and about 24% of the adult population shared the traditional religious perspectives that characterize many conservative activists (roughly 45 million people).<sup>2</sup>

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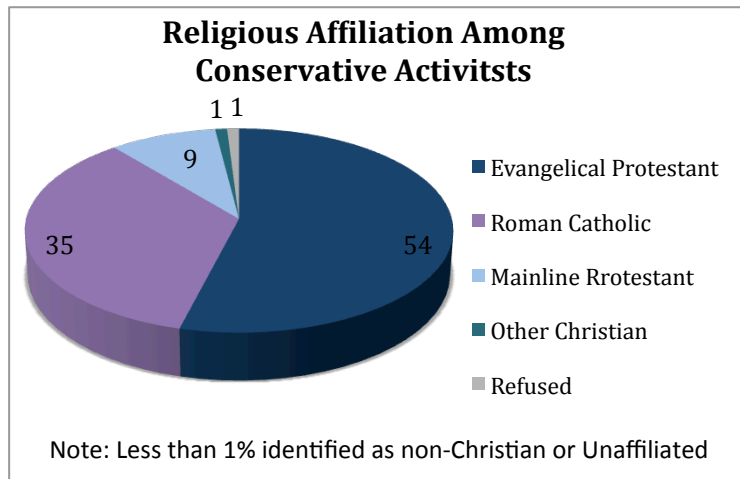
<sup>1</sup> John C. Green and Robert P. Jones, two of the authors of this report, bring considerable experience studying conservative and religious activists. See, for example, John C. Green, Mark J. Rozell, and Clyde Wilcox, eds. *The Values Campaign: The Christian Right and the 2004 Elections* (Georgetown University Press, 2006); and Robert P. Jones, *Progressive & Religious: How Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist Leaders are Moving Beyond the Culture Wars and Transforming American Public Life* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> See John C. Green’s “Twelve Tribes of American Politics” analysis on Beliefnet.com. In this analysis the core constituencies of progressive activists included the “religious left” and the “spiritual but not religious,” while the core constituencies of the conservative activists included the “religious right” and the “heartland culture warriors.” These groups surely underestimate the potential appeal and influence of conservative and progressive religious movements. <http://www.beliefnet.com/News/Politics/The-Twelve-Tribes-of-American-Politics-in-the-2008-Election.aspx?p=3>.

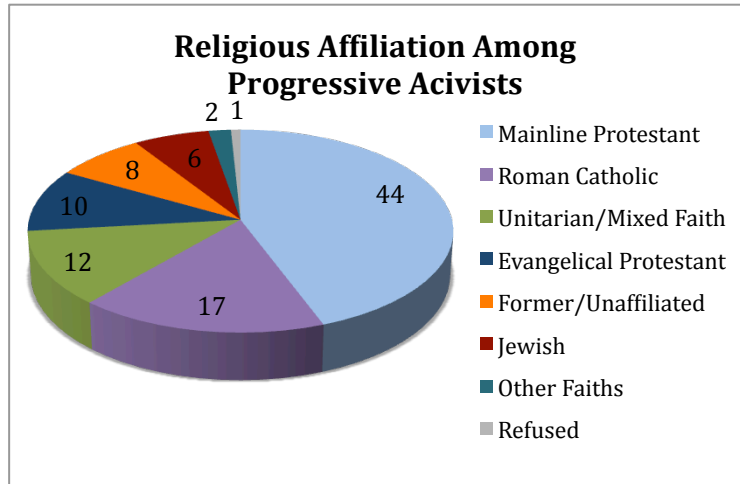
# PART I. A COMPARATIVE PORTRAIT OF CONSERVATIVE AND PROGRESSIVE RELIGIOUS ACTIVISTS

## Religious Affiliation

Conservative and progressive religious activists have distinct profiles in terms of affiliation, practice, and belief. Conservative religious activists are almost exclusively Christian, with a majority (54%) identifying as evangelical Protestant. More than one-third (35%) are Roman Catholic, and about 1-in-10 (9%) are affiliated with Mainline Protestantism. Only 1% identify with some other Christian faith, such as Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Orthodox Christians or Jehovah’s Witness, and less than 1% belong to non-Christian religions or are unaffiliated.



Progressive activists are markedly more diverse in terms of religious affiliation. No single faith tradition makes up a majority of progressive religious activists. A plurality (44%) of progressive religious activists identify as Mainline Protestants, one-sixth (17%) are Roman Catholics, and one-tenth are Evangelical Protestants. Twelve percent identify with Unitarian-Universalists, interfaith, or mixed faith groups. Six percent of progressive religious activists are Jewish. Interestingly, 8% of these activists have no formal religious affiliation or identify as formerly affiliated. Two percent identify with other religious traditions.



Both sets of activists differ from the religious affiliation of the American public. Conservative activists have more than twice the number of Evangelical Protestants (54% to 26%), and have significantly more Roman Catholics (35% to 24%), and have far fewer members from all the other religious traditions than the general population. Meanwhile, the progressive activists are composed of far more Mainline Protestants (44% to 18%), Unitarian-Universalists/mixed faith groups (12% to 1%) ,and Jews (6 to 2%) than the public, but fewer Roman Catholics and Evangelicals (Pew RLS 2007).<sup>3</sup>

## Religious Practices and Beliefs

Compared to the general public, both conservative and progressive religious activists register relatively high levels of traditional religious engagement. Among conservative religious activists, nearly all (96%) say religion is “extremely” or “very important” in their lives. Nearly three-quarters of progressive religious activists say that religion is either “extremely” (43%) or “very important” (31%). These figures are larger than the approximately six-in-ten (62%) Americans overall who report religion as “extremely” or “very important” (Death Penalty Poll 2007).

Both activist groups also report higher rates of formal worship attendance compared to the general public. Among conservative activists, nearly 9-in-10 attend worship services weekly or more often, and more than half (52%) attend services more than once a week. A majority (51%) of progressive activists also report that they attend worship services once a week or more.<sup>4</sup> In the public, about 4-

Religious Salience, Practices, and Belief		
	Conservative	Progressive
Religion is...	<u>Activists</u>	<u>Activists</u>
Extremely important	78	43
Very important	18	31
Somewhat important	2	10
Not too important	1	7
Not at all important	*	6
Refused (VOL.)	2	3
<b>Worship attendance...</b>		
More than once a week	52	25
Once a week	37	36
Several times a month	5	13
A few times a year	2	11
Seldom/Never	2	13
Refused (VOL.)	2	2
<b>Scripture is....</b>		
Word of God, Literal	48	3
Word of God, Not literal	36	19
Contains word of God	10	36
One important source of wisdom	2	21
Ancient book of legends	*	17
Refused (VOL.)	4	4

<sup>3</sup> The benchmark comparison for Unitarian-Universalists/mixed faith groups is an approximation. We compared this eclectic group to the Religious Landscape Survey category “Unitarians and other liberal faiths,” which includes analogous but not identical traditions (Pew Religious Landscape Survey 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Note that one important contributing factor to the disparity in frequency of attendance between conservative

in-10 (43%) report attending worship services at least weekly. One-quarter of the general public says they seldom or never attend worship services, a level significantly greater than conservative (2%) or progressive (13%) activists (PRR 2008).

While both conservative and progressive religious activists demonstrate high levels of formal religious practice, they have strikingly different beliefs about the Bible. Nearly half (48%) of conservative activists believe that the Bible is the literal word of God, a view held by only 3% of progressive activists. On the other hand, a plurality (36%) of progressive activists believe that the Bible contains the word of God but reflects the historical context in which it was written, a view held by only 1-in-10 conservative activists. Moreover, nearly 4-in-10 progressive activists say the Bible is only one important source of wisdom (21%) or an ancient book of legends and stories (17%). Among conservative activists, only 2% embrace these views of the Bible.

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and progressive religious activists is that conservative religious activists often attend churches (e.g. evangelical churches) that offer more opportunities for and expect higher attendance rates than churches attended by progressive religious activists (e.g., Mainline Protestant churches). According to the 2007 National Congregations Study, nearly one-third (29%) of all congregations offer only one service per week, and these are more likely to be Mainline Protestant congregations (Chavez 2007).

## Demographic Comparisons

The demographic portraits of conservative and progressive religious activists show similarities and differences.

### *Gender, Age, and Race*

One significant difference between conservative and progressive activists is the ratio of men to women. Among the ranks of conservative activists, men significantly outnumber women (59% to 40%). This pattern exists despite the fact that conservative women’s groups are an important component of the conservative religious movement. Among progressive activists, on the other hand, there is more gender parity but women slightly outnumber men (52% to 46%).

Both groups are much older than the general population, a pattern common among political activists in general. Nearly half (49%) of conservative religious activists and 43% of progressive religious activists are over the age of 65. Less than 1-in-5 conservative and progressive activists are 50 years of age or younger (16% and 17% respectively), compared to 60% of the general population (PRR 2008).

In addition, both groups of activists are predominantly white. More than 9-in-10 conservative activists (95%) and progressive activists (92%) identify as white.<sup>5</sup>

Demographic Comparisons		
	Conservative	Progressive
<b>Gender</b>	<u>Activists</u>	<u>Activists</u>
Male	<b>59</b>	46
Female	40	52
Refused (VOL.)	1	2
<b>Age</b>		
18-34	2	4
35-50	14	13
51-65	32	38
Over 65	<b>49</b>	43
Refused (VOL.)	3	2
<b>Education</b>		
High school or less	9	1
Some college	19	7
College graduate	30	17
Post-graduate	40	<b>72</b>
Refused (VOL.)	2	3
<b>Community Type</b>		
Rural/Small town	<b>25</b>	16
Small City	16	18
Medium		
City/Suburbs	24	22
Major city/Suburbs	31	<b>40</b>
Refused (VOL.)	4	4

### *Education and Income*

Religious activists, like other types of activists, have very high levels of educational attainment and income compared to the public. Seven-in-ten conservative activists have at least a college degree, and 4-in-10 have post-graduate education. Education levels

<sup>5</sup> See survey methodology in Appendix A for an explanation of how the political engagement of African Americans and the sampling frame may have impacted the ethnic composition of the sample.

among progressive activists are even higher. Nearly 9-in-10 progressive activists have at least a college education, and nearly three quarters (72%) have post-graduate training. Among the public, only 17% have a college degree or post-graduate training (PRR 2008).

Despite the comparatively lower levels of educational attainment among conservative activists, this group has somewhat higher levels of income than progressive activists. Nearly 4-in-10 (38%) conservative religious activists reported income of at least \$100,000 per year, and almost one-quarter made \$150,000 per year or more. Among progressive activists, 30% reported at least \$100,000 per year, and only 13% made at least \$150,000 per year. Six-in-ten progressive activists made less than \$100,000 per year, compared to only 47% of conservative activists.

### ***Region and Community Type***

Both conservative and progressive religious activists are fairly evenly distributed across the country in geographic term. However, conservative activists are somewhat more likely to reside in the Midwest (26% vs. 20%), while progressive activists are somewhat more likely to reside in the Northeast (16% vs. 11%). Roughly equal numbers of conservative and progressive religious activists are found in the South (29% and 27% respectively) and West (21% and 24% respectively).

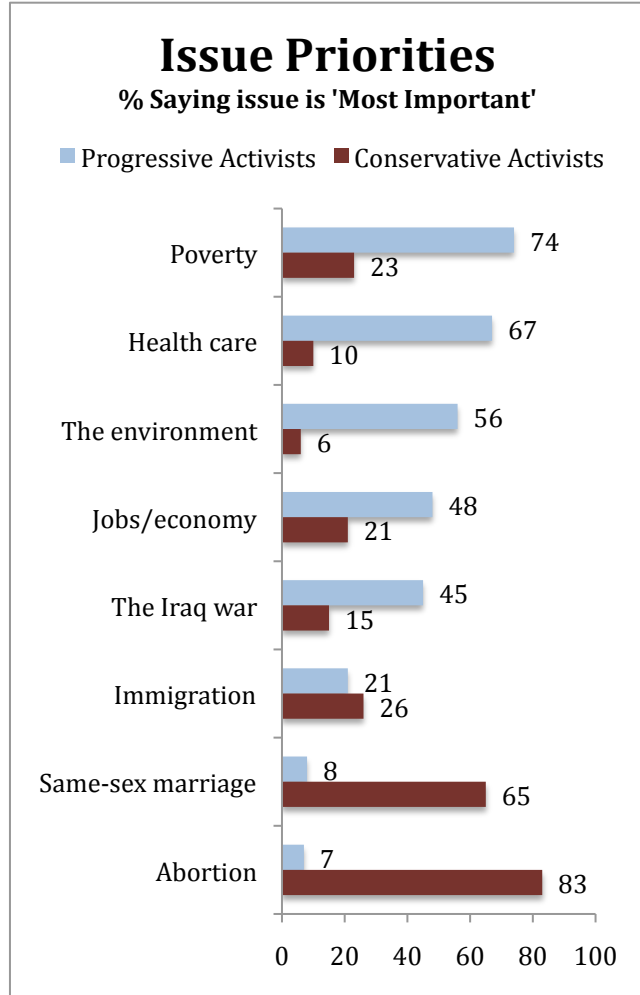
There are significant differences in the types of communities that conservative and progressive activists call home. Conservative activists are more likely to live in rural areas or small towns (25% vs. 16%), while progressive activists are more likely to live in major cities and their surrounding suburbs (40% vs. 31%). Roughly equal numbers of conservative and progressive activists live in small or medium cities and their surrounding suburbs.

## Issue Priorities and Positions

### Most Important Issues

There are dramatic differences between the issue priorities of conservative and progressive religious activists when asked about the importance of eight prominent issues for the political involvement of “religious people.”

A majority of conservative activists gave priority to two issues that they say are most important for religious people: abortion and same-sex marriage. More than 8-in-10 conservative activists say that it is most important that religious people get involved on the issue of abortion. Nearly two-thirds (65%) say it is most important that religious people are focused on same-sex marriage. No other issues were ranked most important by a majority of conservative activists. For example, only 1-in-10 conservative activists say that health care is most important for religious people to engage on.

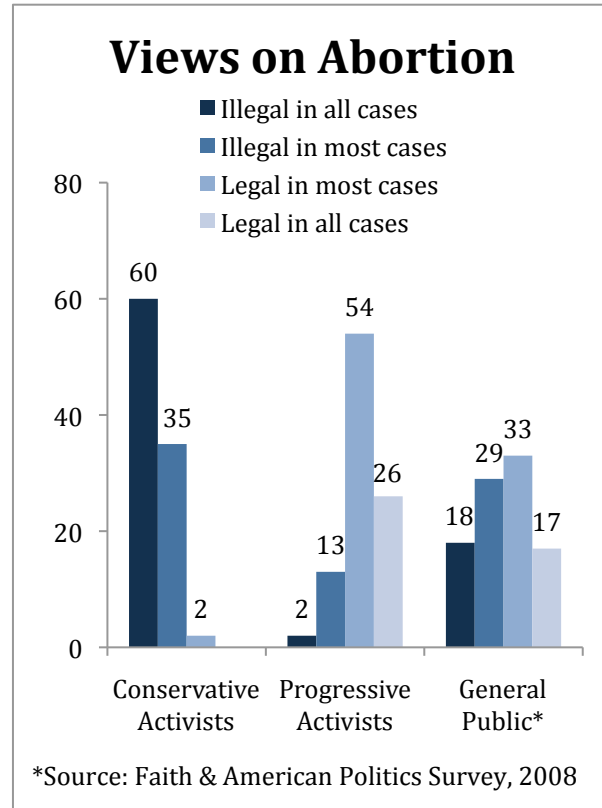


In stark contrast, the issue agenda for progressive activists is much broader, with a majority giving priority to issues such as poverty, health care, and the environment. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of progressive religious activists say it is most important that religious people focus on poverty and homelessness, more than two-thirds (67%) cite health care, and a majority (56%) cite the environment. Slightly less than half say jobs and the economy (48%) and the Iraq war (45%) are issues on which it is most important for religious people to be involved. In contrast to the conservative activists, less than 1-in-10 of progressive activists identified the issues of same-sex marriage (8%) and abortion (7%) as priorities for religious people.

## Positions on Cultural Issues

On most cultural issues, conservative and progressive religious activists hold nearly opposite views overall. But there is more diversity of opinion among the ranks of progressive activists than among conservative activists.

Conservative religious activists are nearly universally opposed to legalized abortion. More than 9-in-10 conservative activists say abortion should be illegal in all cases (60%) or most cases (35%). Less than 3% say abortion should be legal in either all or most cases. In contrast, 8-in-10 progressive activists say abortion should be legal in all cases (26%) or in most cases (54%). About one-seventh say that abortion should be legal in few (13%) or no cases (2%). The general public is fairly evenly divided on the issue of abortion, with half (50%) saying abortion should be legal in all or most cases, compared to 47% saying it should be illegal in all or most cases.



Conservative religious activists are also overwhelmingly opposed to same-sex marriage. More than 8-in-10 (82%) say the law should define marriage as a union between a man and woman. Fifteen percent say the law should define a marriage as a union between a man and woman but recognize legal agreements between same-sex couples. Only 1% of conservative activists say the law should define marriage as a union of two people regardless of gender.

In contrast, support for same-sex marriage is strong among progressive activists. Nearly 6-in-10 (59%) progressive activists say the law should define marriage as a union of two people regardless of gender. One-third say the law should recognize legal agreements between same-sex couples but define marriage as a union between a man and woman and only 4% say the law should define marriage strictly as a union between a man and woman.

On the more general question of basic rights for gay and lesbian people, conservative activists are somewhat divided, whereas progressive activists are nearly unanimously supportive. Among conservative activists, nearly half (49%) disagree that “homosexuals should have the same rights and privileges as other Americans,”

compared to only one-third who agree. In contrast, more than 9-in-10 (91%) progressive activists agree that gay and lesbian Americans should have equal rights, with nearly three quarters (73%) voicing strong agreement.

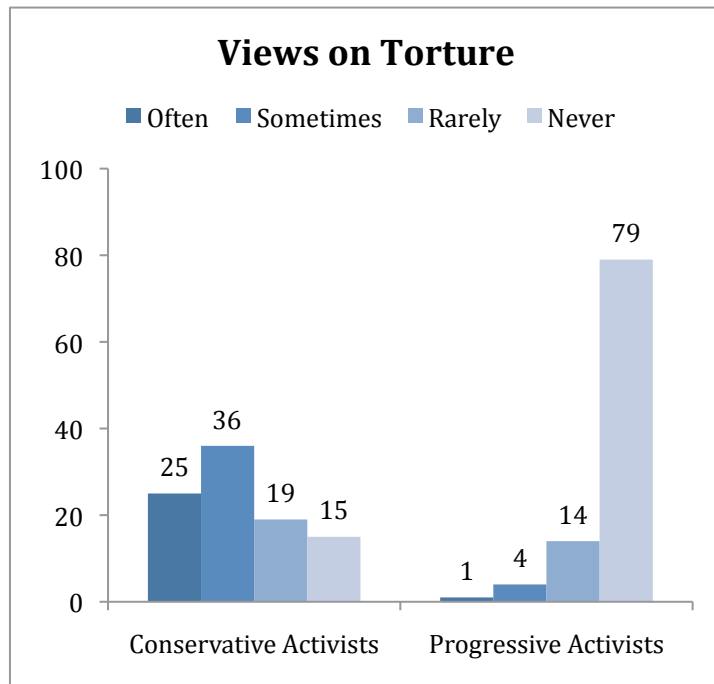
Conservative and progressive activists also have opposing views on the issue of stem cell research. Eighty-four percent of conservative activists agree that the government should ban all research involving stem cells from human embryos. Among progressive activists, an equal number (84%) oppose a government ban on this research.

**Foreign Policy and Security Issues**

Across a range of foreign policy and security issues, the views of conservative and progressive religious activists are polarized in a fashion similar to cultural issues. More than 8-in-10 conservative activists say the war in Iraq was completely (35%) or probably (48%) justified, compared to only 14% who say the war was completely or probably unjustified. In contrast, more than 9-in-10 progressive activists say the war was either completely (80%) or probably (13%) unjustified, compared to only 5% who believe that the war may have been justified in any way.

Likewise, nearly 9-in-10 (89%) conservative activists agree that the U.S. should keep troops in Iraq until the situation has stabilized, compared to only 7% who say the U.S. should bring home troops as soon as possible. Among progressive activists, three-quarters say the U.S. should bring troops home, while about 1-in-5 say troops should be kept in Iraq until things have stabilized.

Among conservative activists, a majority say torture can often (25%) or sometimes (36%) be justified for purposes of national security. About one-third say it can rarely (19%) or never (15%) be justified. In sharp contrast, there is near universal opposition to torture among progressive activists. Nearly 8-in-10 activists say that torture can never be justified, and an additional 14% say it can rarely be justified. Only 5% say it can often or sometimes be justified.



Conservative and religious activists are also strongly polarized over the so-called “Bush doctrine” of preemptive military action. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of

conservative activists say the U.S. must be able to use preemptive military action against other countries given the threat of terrorism. Approximately the same proportions (75%) of progressive activists take the opposing view that U.S. should not be able to take preemptive action against other countries.

Views about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict show great differences between the two activist groups. Almost three-quarters (73%) of conservative activists agree that “the U.S. should support Israel over the Palestinians in the Middle East,” compared to only 12% of progressive activists. However, among progressive Jewish activists, support for Israel is much higher than among progressive religious activists overall. Six-in-ten progressive Jewish activists say the U.S. should support Israel over the Palestinians, while 29% disagree.

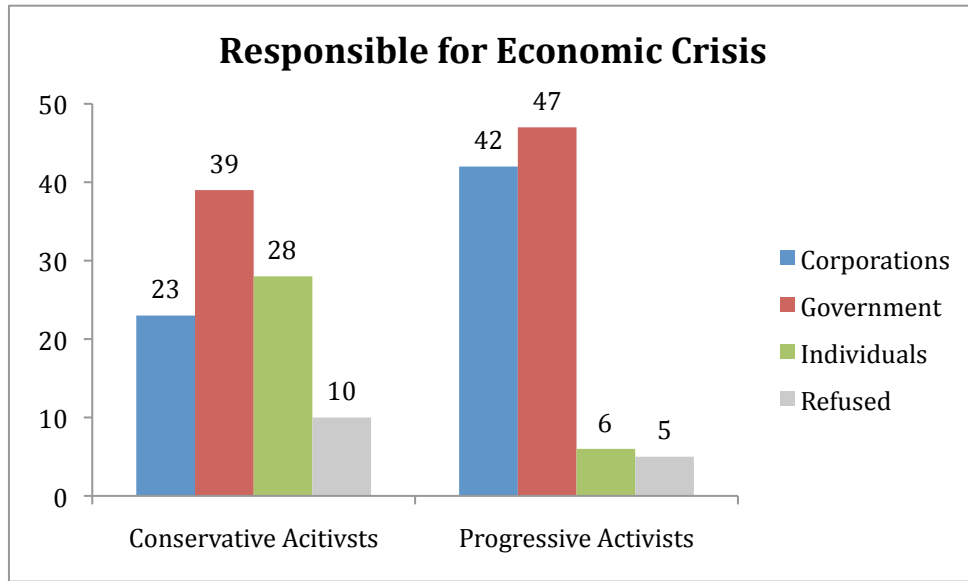
### ***The Role of Government and Economic Policy Issues***

Across every economic and social welfare issue—including tax cuts, poverty reduction, environmental protection, and health care—conservative and progressive religious activists also hold divergent views. Generally speaking, conservative activists want fewer government services and less government involvement in issues like the environment and health care and support larger tax cuts targeted at wealthier Americans. Progressive activists want the opposite.

Eighty-six percent of conservative activists believe that government should provide fewer services and cut spending. Approximately the same number (85%) says that large tax cuts are good for the economy because they encourage necessary investment and create jobs. Six-in-ten (61%) conservative activists say that tax cuts should be directed at upper income people rather than lower-income people in order to spur economic growth.

Progressive activists have a dramatically different perspective on government services and taxation. More than two-thirds (68%) believe that government should increase spending and provide more services. Three-quarters say that large tax cuts are bad for the economy because they lead to deficits and prevent necessary government spending. About 9-in-10 (89%) progressive activists say tax cuts should be aimed at lower income people rather than higher income people as a way to increase fairness.

On specific economic issues, conservative and progressive activists are also at odds. Only 1-in-10 conservative activists agree that “the federal government should spend more to reduce poverty and hunger in the U.S. even if it means raising taxes on the middle class,” compared to 72% of progressive activists. Only 13% of conservative activists agree that “more environmental protection is needed even if it raises prices or costs jobs,” compared to nearly 9-in-10 (87%) progressive activists (50% strongly agree). On the issue of health care reform, only 6% of conservative activists agree “the U.S. should have comprehensive national health insurance even if it means fewer choices for patients,” compared to more than three-quarters (78%) of progressive activists.



Finally, there is even significant disagreement between religious activists about who is responsible for the current economic crisis. Conservative activists are much more likely to hold government and individuals responsible, while progressive activists lay the blame almost entirely with government and corporations. A plurality (39%) of conservative activists say “government neglect that allowed unethical business practices” caused the current economic crisis, 28% say “careless individuals who borrowed more money than they could afford” are responsible, and less than 1-in-4 hold “corporations that made risky business decisions” responsible. In contrast, nearly half (47%) of progressive activists hold negligent government responsible, and 42% blame greedy corporations. Only 6% of progressive activists see careless individuals as primarily responsible for the economic crisis.

## Political Identification and Behavior

### *Partisanship & Ideology*

As one might expect, the overwhelming majority (91%) of conservative religious activists identify politically as conservative. More than one-quarter (27%) say they are extremely conservative. Progressive activists are slightly less ideologically polarized. More than 8-in-10 (81%) identify as liberal, but only 12% say they are extremely liberal.

Both groups of activists are strong partisans. Eighty-four percent of conservative activists identify with or lean towards the Republican Party, while an equal number of progressive activists lean towards or identify with the Democratic Party. Only about 1-in-10 progressive and conservative activists (9% and 8% respectively) identify as politically independent.

## ***Voting***

When it comes to voting priorities, the two activist groups report similar views. Among Republican conservative activists, only 14% say they strongly support their party under all circumstances. Nearly half (48%) says they support their party only when it offers a candidate they believe in, and about one-third (31%) say they support their party only when it pursues issues important to them. Only about 1-in-5 (22%) Democratic progressive activists say they strongly support their party under all circumstances. About 4-in-10 (39%) say they support their party only when it offers a candidate they believe in, and one-third say they support their party only when it pursues issues important to them.

In the 2008 general election, both conservative and progressive activists overwhelmingly favored their party's nominees. Nine-in-ten conservative activists voted for John McCain, whereas slightly more than 9-in-10 (93%) progressive activists voted for Barack Obama.

Analysis of the presidential primary races reveals some disarray among conservative activists, while progressive activists were united behind Obama. In the Republican primary, there was no clear favorite candidate among conservative activists: 28% said their first choice was Mike Huckabee, 22% preferred Mitt Romney, 17% preferred John McCain, and 8% preferred Fred Thompson. Another 15% of conservative activists mentioned some other candidate. In the Democratic primary, Barack Obama was the solid favorite among progressive activists. Nearly 6-in-10 (58%) progressive activists said Obama was their first choice in the Democratic primary. About 1-in-5 said they preferred Hillary Clinton, and only 6% preferred John Edwards.

## **Religion in Public Life**

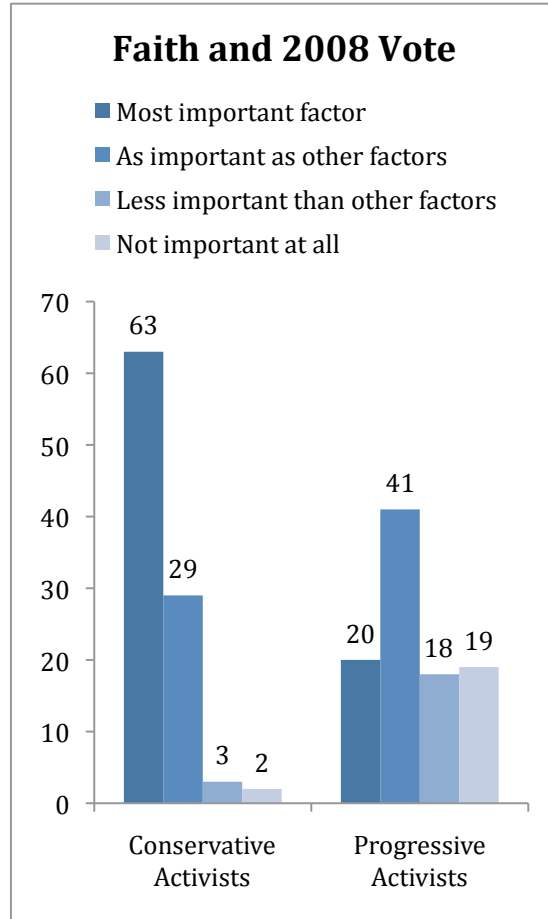
### ***Religion in the 2008 Election***

Conservative and progressive religious activists have sharply contrasting assessments of whether the levels of public expressions of faith by political leaders during the 2008 election were appropriate.

More than two-thirds (68%) of conservative religious activists say there was not enough public expression of faith and prayer by political leaders during the 2008 election. About one-quarter (24%) say there was about the right amount, and only 2% say there was too much. A majority (52%) of progressive activists say there was about the right amount of religious expressions by political leaders, although nearly 4-in-10 (39%) say there was too much. Only 5% say there was not enough.

Faith played an important role in the voting decisions for both groups of activists, but conservative activists were more likely to report that their faith was the most important factor. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of conservative activists say that faith was the most important factor in their voting decision, and about 3-in-10 (29%) say that faith was about as important as other factors. Only 5% say that faith was less important than other factors or not at all important.

Among progressive activists, 20% report that faith was the most important factor in their voting decision, and 41% say it was as important as other factors. A significant number of progressive activists say that faith was less important than other factors (18%) or not at all important (19%) in deciding how to vote.



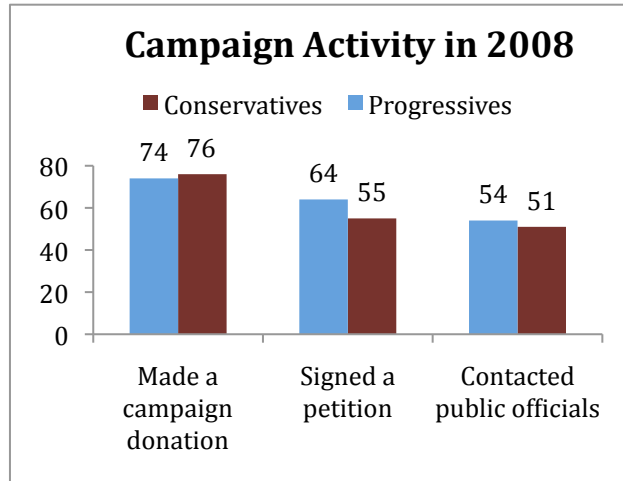
### Political Engagement

Overall, progressive and conservative religious activists were much more involved in the presidential campaign than in other political campaigns in 2008. But conservative activists were more active in state-wide and local races, while progressive activists were slightly more active in the national campaign.

In the 2008 presidential campaign, nearly 6-in-10 (57%) conservative activists say they were either somewhat or very active, compared to nearly two-thirds (65%) of progressive activists. In the presidential primary campaigns, about half (49%) of conservative activists report being active, compared to a solid majority (56%) of progressive activists. Conservative activists report being more active than progressive activists in congressional campaigns (46% vs. 41%), statewide campaigns (41% vs. 37%) and ballot issues (42% vs. 34%).

### Traditional Campaign Activities

Conservative and progressive religious activists both reported that their most frequent campaign activities were making a campaign donation (76% and 74% respectively), signing a petition (55% and 64% respectively), and contacting public officials (51% and 54% respectively). Among less common political activities, conservative activists report lower levels of involvement. About twice as many progressive activists as conservative activists report attending a public meeting (40% vs. 21%) and attending a campaign rally (34% vs. 16%). Conservative activists were more likely than progressive activists to participate in a boycott (16% to 8%). Progressive activists were three times as likely to make campaign phone calls during the election (24% to 8%).

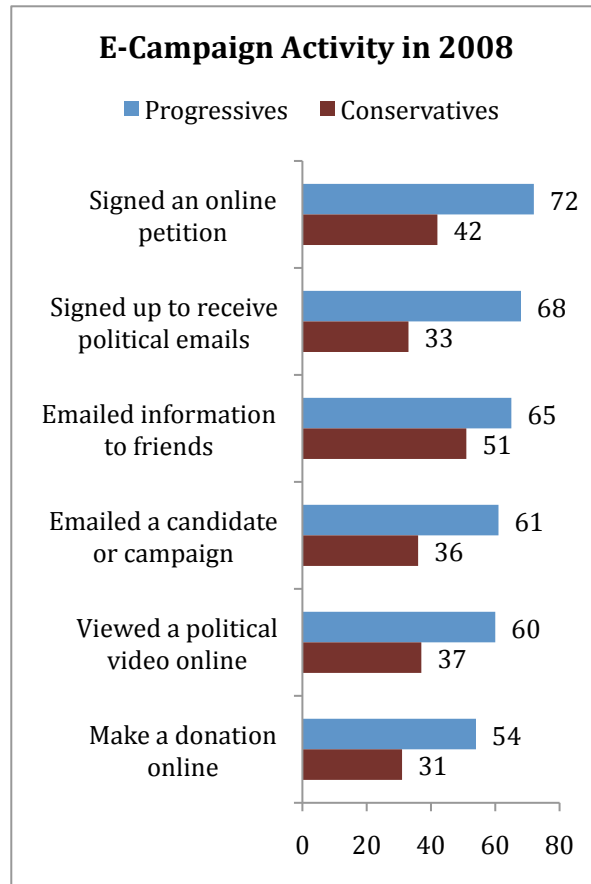


### Online Campaign Activities

Conservative activists were significantly less likely than progressive activists to have participated in a variety of online campaign activities.

A slim majority (51%) of conservative activists say they emailed information to friends, and this was the only online campaign activity in which a majority of conservative activists report participating. Slightly more than 4-in-10 (42%) say they signed an online-petition. Less than 4-in-10 conservative activists reported participating in any other online campaign activity.

Among progressive activists, 72% report having signed an online petition. About two-thirds say they signed up to receive political emails (68%) or emailed information to friends (65%). Six-in-ten



progressive activists say they emailed a candidate or campaign (61%) or viewed a political video online (60%). A majority (54%) of progressive activists say they made a political donation online.

## Church and State Issues

A majority of both religious activist groups also believe that clergy and congregations should play a role in politics, although progressive activists express a higher degree of concern about the direct involvement of clergy and congregations and are significantly more likely to support separation of church and state.

Among conservative activists, 83% *disagree* that “clergy and congregations should stay out of politics;” less than 1-in-10 (8%) agree with this statement. Among progressive activists, a majority (53%) also *disagree* that clergy and congregations should stay out of politics, compared to about one-third (30%) who agree. Nearly 1-in-5 (17%) progressive activists offers no opinion about clergy and congregations getting involved in politics.

Conservative and progressive religious activists also have different views of the religious origins of the United States and about the current relationship between religious organizations and the state. Nearly all (93%) conservative activists believe that America was founded as a Christian nation. More than one-third (36%) of conservative activists believe “America has always been and is currently a Christian nation,” while 57% believe that “America was a Christian nation in the past but is not now.” Among progressive activists, on the other hand, less than 1-in-5 (17%) believe that American was and still is a Christian nation, and 20% believe the U.S. was but is no longer a Christian nation. A solid majority (57%) of progressive activists believe that America has never been a Christian nation.

Among conservative activists, only about 1-in-5 (21%) agree that “the U.S. should maintain a strict separation of church and state,” compared to 62% who disagree and 17% who are uncertain. Among progressive activists, more than 8-in-10 (81%) agree that the U.S. should have a strict separation of church and state, and a majority (51%) strongly agrees.

Nearly 9-in-10 (87%) conservative activists say they are more worried about public officials who don’t pay enough attention to religion than about officials who are too close to religious leaders (6%). Progressive activists hold the opposite view: they are much more worried about public officials who are too close to religious leaders than about officials who don’t pay enough attention to religion (81% to 13% respectively).

## **PART II. A PROFILE OF CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS ACTIVISTS**

### **The Conservative Religious Movement**

More than three-quarters (77%) of the conservative religious activists consider themselves to be members of the conservative Christian movement, and more than 7-in-10 (72%) activists report belonging or contributing to a pro-family, pro-life, or conservative Christian organization.

The most common form of engagement reported by the members of these organizations is paying dues or donating to the group (90%) and receiving a newsletter or other materials (89%). Roughly one-quarter (27%) of activists report participating in group activities or projects, and less than 1-in-5 (17%) report attending local meetings.

Conservative activists report that the most common activities of their respective organizations include educating citizens about issues (87%), contacting public officials (82%), urging the group's members to contact officials (82%), and conducting awareness campaigns (70%).

### **Religious People and Political Action**

Conservative activists overwhelmingly believe that religious people should stay focused on political action as opposed to withdrawing to pursue non-political activities (80% to 1% respectively). About 1-in-5 (18%) say religious people should do some of both.

More than 7-in-10 (71%) conservative activists say that religious people should stay focused on social issues like abortion and same-sex marriage, while only 1% say that religious people should shift their focus to issues such as poverty and the environment. Roughly one-quarter (27%) say that religious people should focus on both kinds of issues.

Conservative activists are divided on the main goals of religious people when they engage in politics. More than one-third (37%) say the primary goal should be to transform society over all, and nearly as many (35%) say the primary goal should be proclaiming their own distinctive values. Another one-fifth (22%) say the goal should be to correct specific social problems.

Conservative activists are generally optimistic about the effectiveness of their own activism, but they are less confident about their own influence in the 2008 election. More than two-thirds (69%) say that political action by religious people can help restore

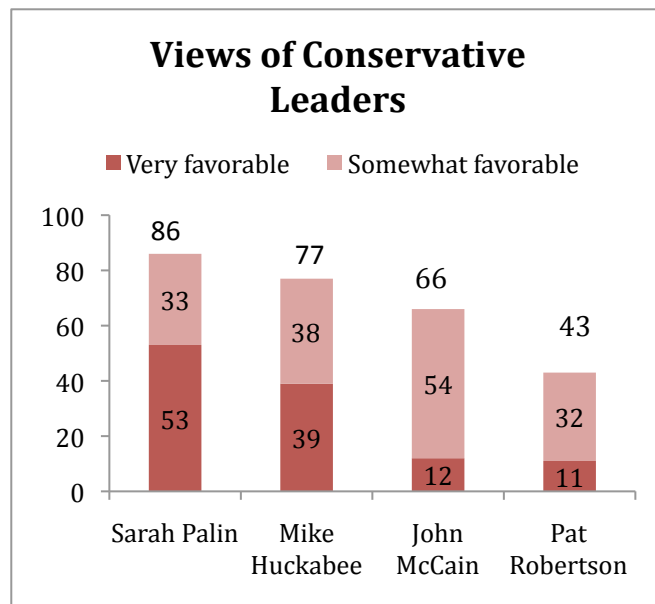
traditional morality in American society. About one-quarter (24%) say that religious activism may not be able to restore traditional morality but it may slow the process of deterioration. Only 3% believe that action by religious people will do little to restore traditional morality.

In the 2008 election, however, conservative activists perceived themselves as having little influence in comparison to other political groups. In fact, by a nearly 2-to-1 margin, conservative religious activists say “religious progressive groups” had a greater influence than “religious conservative groups” (25% vs. 13%). Conservative activists believe that the most influential groups in the 2008 election were labor unions (76%), African American groups (74%), and gay rights groups (64%).

**Views of Religious Advocacy Groups and Leaders**

Among conservative activists, the two most popular and well-known conservative organizations are faith-based groups, the National Right to Life Committee, with 82% of activists expressing a favorable opinion, and Focus on the Family, with 79% favorability. At least 6-in-10 activists report a very favorable opinion of each of these organizations (65% and 60% respectively). Other well-known groups that were viewed favorably include the Family Research Council (61%), American Center for Law and Justice (60%), Concerned Women for America (56%), and the Christian Coalition (55%).

Among conservative political leaders, Sarah Palin stands apart as being most popular and well known. Nearly 9-in-10 (86%) say they have a favorable opinion of the former Alaska governor, with a majority (53%) reporting a very favorable opinion. Mike Huckabee is viewed favorably by more than three-quarters (77%) of conservative activists and nearly 4-in-10 say they have a very favorable opinion of the former governor. John McCain is viewed favorably by two-thirds of conservative activists, but only about 1-in-10 (12%) have a very favorable opinion of him. Only about 4-in-10 (43%) of conservative activists have a favorable opinion of Pat Robertson.



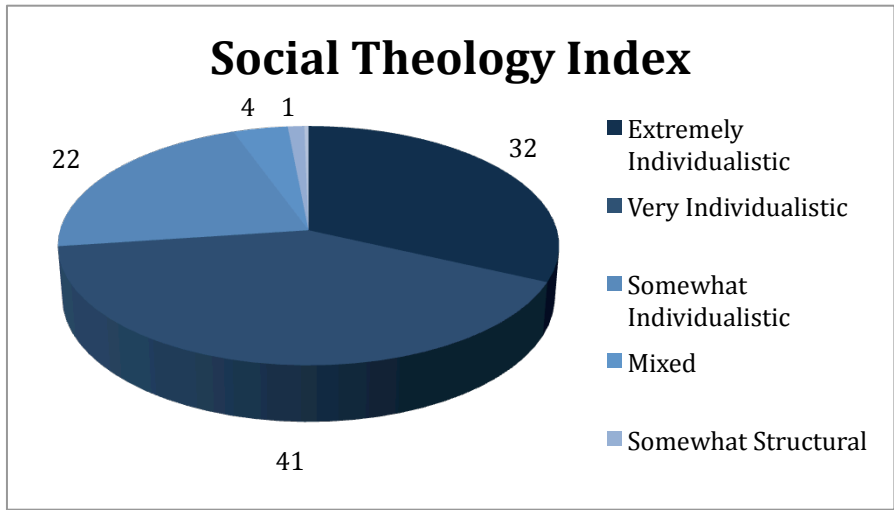
## Solving the Nation’s Problems

In terms of solving the nation’s problems, conservative activists generally emphasize an individualist approach to solving social problems, with an emphasis on personal morality, rather than a structural approach that focuses on social reform. More than 9-in-10 (92%) agree that the main cause of America’s problems is moral decay, compared to only 4% who believe that the main cause of America’s problems is poverty and discrimination. More than two-thirds (67%) of conservative activists agree that “if enough people were brought to Christ, social ills would take care of themselves.” Only 1-in-6 (15%) disagree with this statement. Finally, conservative activists are equally divided (37% vs. 37%) about whether “social justice is at the heart of all authentic religious values, with about one-quarter (26%) expressing no opinion.

**Theological Ethics Scale Questions**

1. *The main cause of America’s problems is moral decay.*
2. *The main cause of America’s problems is poverty and discrimination.*
3. *Social Justice is at the heart of all authentic religious values.*
4. *If enough people were brought to Christ, social ills would take care of themselves.*

To better understand activists’ approach to applying their theology to solving societal problems, we constructed a seven-point scale from these four questions.<sup>6</sup> Overall, nearly all conservative religious activists have a theological ethic that is either extremely (32%), very (41%), or somewhat (22%) individualistic. Approximately 1-in-20 have mixed views, and only 1% of conservative activists have a theological ethic that leans toward the structural end of the spectrum.



<sup>6</sup> The Theological Ethics Scale was created by combining and recoding the questions above. Positive values were coded as a structural orientation, and negative values were coded as an individualistic orientation, resulting in a single scale ranging from -6 to 6. This scale was divided into categories as follows: values of -6 and -5: extremely individualist; values of 5 and 6: extremely structural perspective, etc. A value of 0 was classified as mixed.

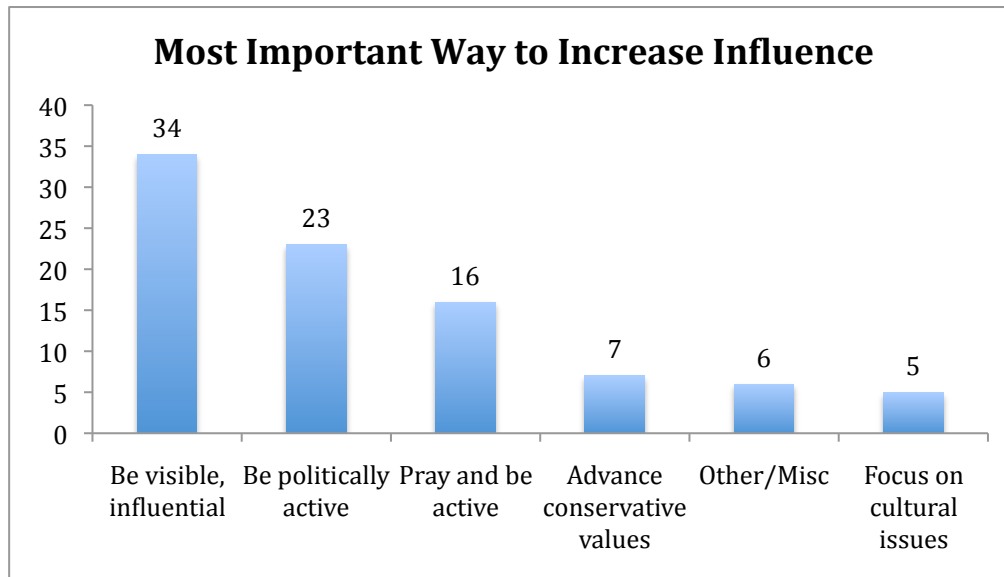
## Religious Identity and Traditionalism

The overwhelming majority of the conservative activists are self-described religious traditionalists, with 9-in-10 (88%) agreeing that their denomination should “strive to preserve its traditional beliefs and practices” rather than “adjust traditions in light of new ideas” (7%) or “adopt modern beliefs and practices” (1%). This self-description is confirmed in the high levels of reported adherence to traditional religious beliefs and practices (see religious salience measures above).

There is substantial variation, however, in how conservative activists identified themselves religiously. About 1-in-3 (32%) activists identify as evangelical or born-again. About 1-in-6 identify as fundamentalist (15%) or Pentecostal/Charismatic (15%). Respondents in these last two categories sometimes also adopted the evangelical and born-again label as well. Roughly 1-in-4 (24%) identify as traditional but without adopting any other label.

## Future Objectives for Conservative Religious Activists

We asked conservative religious activists an open-ended question about “the *most* important thing religious conservatives should do to maintain or increase their influence in national politics.” Generally speaking, conservative activists, like progressive activists, emphasized being publicly visible and politically active, and conservative activists were more likely to emphasize prayer as the most important activity for increasing their influence.



The most common suggestion, mentioned by more than one-third (34%) of activists, was that religious conservatives should speak out and act, serve as an example, and organize. One activist remarked, “All citizens should be involved – it’s tough for any conservative to get the truth heard when the media is leftist and unashamedly so.”

Another activist stressed the importance of living by example. “Religious conservatives need to live in a manner consistent with their profession of faith – with honest integrity and kindness.”

Nearly one-quarter (23%) suggested being politically active, including supporting and running conservative candidates for office. For instance, one respondent said “Stand up for biblical values and support representatives and leaders who do.” Another called on conservative activists to “place men and women of integrity with moral backbone in leadership offices and judicial and legislative positions.”

About 1-in-6 (16%) conservative activists specifically suggested praying, frequently coupled with a call to political action. One typical suggestion included, “pray and encourage other Christians to vote their morals, not their pocket book.” Another activist offered similar advice: “Pray to God. Keep up with proposed issues that would bring more corruption to our nation. Speak up and vote.” And another combined prayer and example, saying, “PRAY! Religious conservatives need to live in a manner consistent with their profession of faith.”

More than 1-in-10 activists said that advancing conservative or traditional values (7%) and focusing on cultural issues like abortion and same-sex marriage (5%) is the most important way to increase and maintain influence. One respondent called on conservative activists to “proudly, feelingly, intelligently, stand for all human life and traditional marriage.” Some respondents were highly specific, urging fellow conservative activists to “assert fundamental religious principles—e.g., speak out and oppose the practice, advocacy, and tolerance of homosexuality.”

## **PART III. A PROFILE OF PROGRESSIVE RELIGIOUS ACTIVISTS**

### **The Progressive Religious Movement**

More than two-thirds (68%) of progressive religious activists consider themselves part of the progressive religious movement. Slightly more (72%) say they belong to or contribute to progressive religious organizations that focus on issues such as social justice, peace and the environment.

The most common activity among activists who belong to progressive religious organizations is paying dues to the organization or receiving newsletters or other materials. More than 8-in-10 (86%) members of progressive religious groups receive materials from the group, and three-quarters say they pay dues or donate money to it. Less than one-quarter say they participate in group activities or projects, and more than one-quarter (27%) say they attend local meetings of the group.

Progressive activists report that the most common activities in which their respective organizations are involved are educating citizens on issues (80%), contacting public officials (74%), urging members to contact officials (71%), and conducting awareness campaigns (66%).

### **Religious People and Political Action**

Nearly half (46%) of progressive activists believe that religious people should stay focused on political action as opposed to withdrawing to pursue non-political activities. Thirty-six percent say religious people should do some of both. Only 14% say religious people should withdraw completely to pursue non-political activities. For progressive Christian activists, this engagement is connected to a religious mandate. The overwhelming majority (87%) of progressive Christian activists believe that they have a special obligation to solve social problems because of Christ's commandments.

Progressive activists hold diverse opinions about the goals of religious people when they engage in politics. Nearly 4-in-10 (39%) say the primary goal should be to transform society overall. Nearly an equal number (36%) say the primary goal should be to correct specific social problems, and only half as many (16%) say that it should be to proclaim their distinctive values.

A solid majority (62%) of progressive activists believe that religious people should focus primarily on domestic issues like poverty over foreign policy issues like ending the

war in Iraq. About one-third (32%) of activists say that religious people should focus on both types of issues, and only 4% say they should focus more on foreign policy issues.

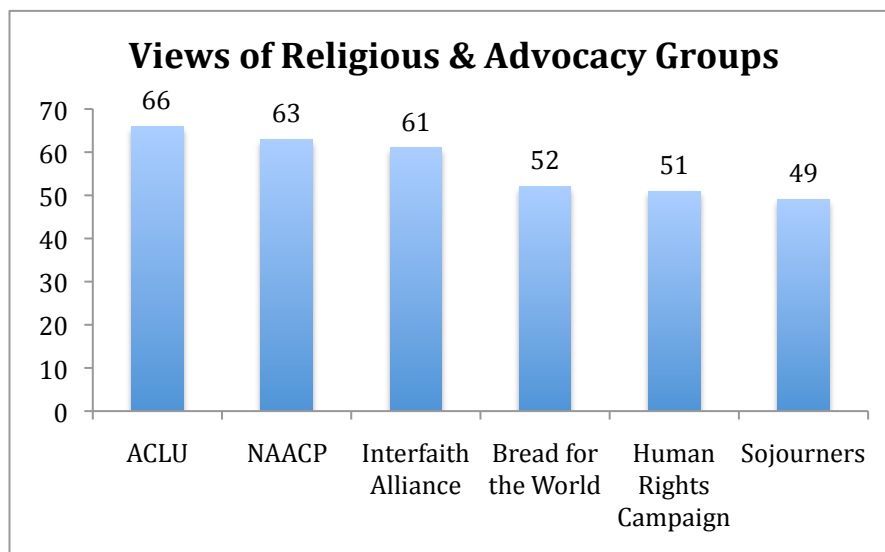
### ***Influence of Progressive Religious Groups***

Progressive activists are generally optimistic about the effectiveness of religious activism. Almost two-thirds (65%) of activists say that political action by religious people can help establish justice in American society. About one-quarter (23%) say that religious activism may not be able to establish justice completely but may correct some injustice. Only 7% say that religious activism can do little to establish justice in America.

Progressive religious activists believe their movement had significant influence over the outcome of the 2008 election. More than 8-in-10 said that religious progressive groups had either some or great influence on the election results. More than 4-in-10 (43%) progressive activists say that progressive religious groups had a great amount of influence, roughly equivalent to the number who said labor unions (44%) and business groups (41%) had a great amount of influence. Only African American groups were viewed as having significantly more influence on the election outcome (63%). Less than one-third (30%) of progressive activists believed that conservative religious groups had a great amount of influence in 2008.

### ***Views of Religious and Non-religious Advocacy Organizations***

Among progressive religious activists, the two most popular and well-known progressive organizations are non-religious organizations that focus primarily on civil rights issues: the NAACP and ACLU. Two-thirds of activists view the ACLU favorably, and 63% have a favorable opinion of the NAACP. Roughly 6-in-10 progressive activists view the Interfaith Alliance favorably. Other groups with high favorability and familiarity marks include Bread for the World (52%), the Human Rights Campaign (51%), and Sojourners (49%).



## Solving the Nation’s Problems

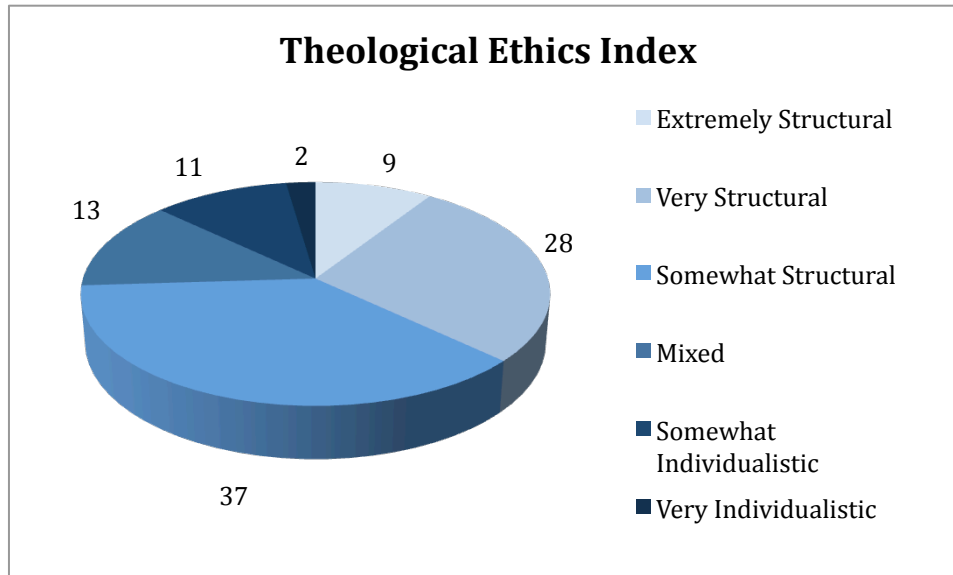
In terms of solving the nation’s problems, a distinguishing attribute of progressive religious activists is their strong emphasis on structural rather than individual solutions to societal problems. More than three-quarters (77%) of progressive religious activists agree “social justice is at the heart of all authentic religious values.” Among progressive Christian activists, 6-in-10 (61%) *disagree* that if enough people were brought to Christ, social ills would take care of themselves; only 13% agree with this statement.

By a roughly 2-to-1 margin, progressive activists are more likely to see the causes of America’s problems in structural terms. Only about 1-in-4 agree that “the main cause of America’s problems is moral decay,” compared to 49% who disagree and 25% who offer no opinion. In contrast, just under half (47%) of activists agree that “the main cause of America’s problems is poverty and discrimination,” compared to 1-in-5 who disagree and one-third who offer no opinion.

### Theological Ethics Scale Questions

1. *The main cause of America’s problems is moral decay*
2. *The main cause of America’s problems is poverty and discrimination*
3. *Social Justice is at the heart of all authentic religious values*

In order to better understand how progressive activists applied their religious beliefs to solving national problems, we developed a theological ethics index using these three questions and a seven-point scale.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> The Theological Ethics Scale was constructed using the three questions above. For details about its construction, see previous footnote 6.

Approximately three-quarters of progressive religious activists have either an extremely structural (9%), very structural (28%), or somewhat structural (37%) theological ethic. On the other end of the spectrum, only about 1-in-8 have a somewhat individual (11%), very individual (2%), or extremely individual (< 1%) theological ethic. Thirteen percent of progressive religious activists have a mixed theological ethic.

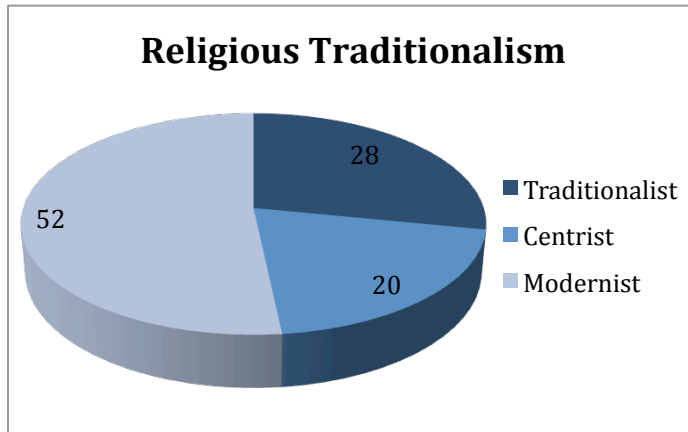
## Religious Identity and Traditionalism

Progressive religious activists identify with a range of labels to describe their religious views. Seven-in-ten progressive religious activists describe their religious views as “progressive,” making it the most popular label. About half of progressive activists also embrace the label “ecumenical” (51%), “interfaith” (48%), and “liberal” (48%). It is notable that despite the fact that 44% of progressive activists belong to Mainline Protestant denominations, only 1-in-4 identify their religious views as “mainline.” Very few describe their religious views as “traditional” (14%) or “evangelical” (13%).

### Religious Traditionalism

In order to more paint a clearer picture of religious perspectives among progressive activists, we created a combined measure of basic religious belief and behavior based on the following items: formal worship attendance, views of scripture, views about morality, and religious salience.<sup>8</sup>

Among progressive activists, 52% can be described as Religious Modernists. A majority of these Religious Modernists say religion is extremely (5%) or very (49%) important in their life, and report attending formal religious services a few times a month or more (53%). Religious Modernists do not believe scripture is the word of God, and instead believe that scripture is one important source of wisdom (34%) or an ancient book of legends and stories (34%). Finally, nearly all (97%) Religious Modernists reject the notion that one must believe in God to be moral.



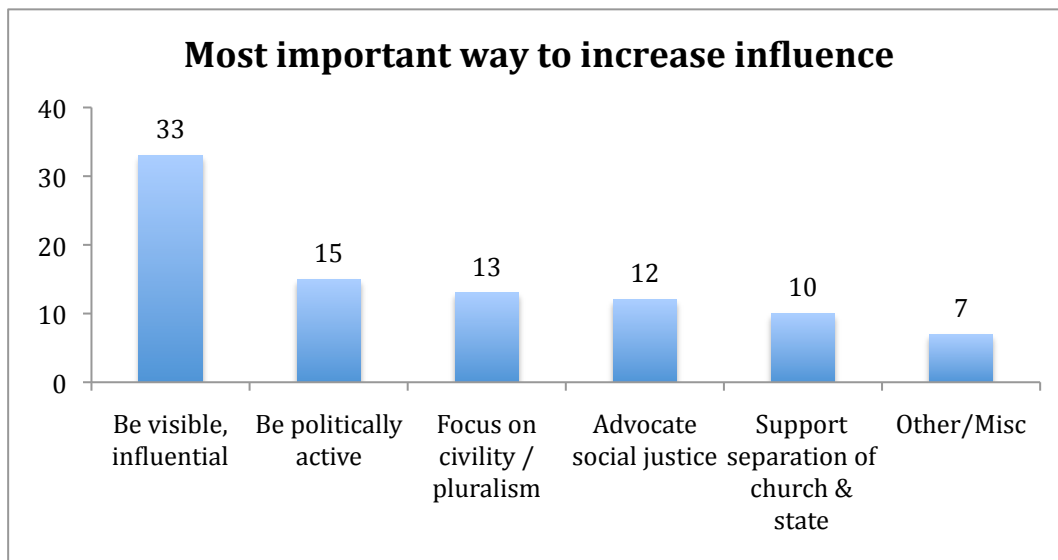
<sup>8</sup> These four measures were combined using a common statistical technique called factor analysis. This technique allows us to isolate a single underlying factor from four unique measures of religious behavior and belief. Factor analysis allows us to discern a fundamental orientation that is not directly measurable, but lies underneath these basic measures. The authors have given a fuller description of this approach elsewhere (Green, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Guth 2007; Jones and Cox 2006).

One-in-five progressive activists can be described as Religious Centrists. More than two-thirds (69%) of these Religious Centrists say religion is extremely important in their life. Eighty-four percent of Religious Centrists attend worship services once a week or more, and 17% attend more than once a week. A majority (57%) of religious centrists believe scripture contains the word of God but reflects the historical context in which it was written. The vast majority (88%) of Religious Centrists also disagree that one must believe in God to be moral.

Nearly 3-in-10 (28%) progressive activists can be described as Religious Traditionalists. Ninety-four percent of these Religious Traditionalists say that religion is extremely important in their life. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of religious traditionalists attend worship services more than once a week. Six-in-ten say that scripture is the word of God but only 9% say it should be interpreted literally. The vast majority (73%) of Religious Traditionalists also disagree that one must believe in God to be moral, but do not disagree as strongly as Centrists or Modernists.

## Future Objectives for Progressive Religious Activists

In an open-ended question, we asked progressive religious activists to tell us what they thought “the most important thing progressive religious people should do to increase or maintain their influence in national politics.”



Progressive activists most frequently mentioned being visible and publicly influential (33%), including speaking out, organizing, reclaiming the faith from the right, or serving as an example. One thing that stood out among responses in this category was the widespread use of active verbs like “continue”, “keep on”, “maintain,” and “remain”—which indicate that progressive activists have a strong sense that they are already experiencing some visible success. One typical comment in this area was the following: “continue to network and fundraise and get the word out about progressive religious

values.” Another activist called on activists to “advocate a progressive agenda while standing as people of faith; we can’t surrender the label of ‘religious values’ to fundamentalists.”

Fifteen percent say that being politically active, such as supporting candidates for public office or a political party, is most important. In this area, there are also a significant number of activists who urge activists to “be careful not to be overly identified with (i.e. incorporated by) either political party—challenge both parties.” Somewhat similar numbers say that focusing on civility, pluralism and the common good (13%), advocating for social justice issues (12%), or supporting separation of church and state (10%) are the most important things progressive religious people should do. In these areas, progressive activists emphasized “the golden rule” and “always speaking to and seeking the common good by means and policies that bring people together.” Many also mentioned support for “the social gospel” and “sticking to issues at the core of religious service: caring for the underprivileged and justice for the oppressed.” Finally, many progressive activists also expressed strong support for separation of church and state and recommended “unequivocally rejecting any formal state-religious alliances.”

## APPENDIX A. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The 2009 Religious Activists Surveys—the first-ever comparative surveys of conservative and progressive religious activists—were conducted by the Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron in partnership with Public Religion Research.

### *Sampling Frame*

Conducting a valid survey of religious activists presents a challenge. First, activists are difficult to find in random samples of the mass public. This problem arises in part from the fact that activists make up a small part of the adult population. Moreover, religious activists make up just a small part of the larger pool of activists in American politics. Second, there is no master list of activists in general, let alone religious activists, from which to draw a random sample. Put another way, it is quite difficult to define the universe of religious activists for purposes of drawing a random sample for a survey.

This study approached the problem in reverse, by sampling activists affiliated with organizations and activities that represent major parts of the universe of religious activists. The samples were then combined to produce an estimate of the activist universe as a whole. This approach has been used by scholars to study political elites and activists—including religious activists.<sup>9</sup> This practical approach certainly has its limitations, and thus the results of this study need to be viewed with these limitations in mind. This approach, however, does have the virtue of providing some systematic information on religious activists that would otherwise not be available.

### *Study Design*

The design of the study proceeded in three steps. First, the authors consulted with scholars, journalists, and leaders of religious organizations to determine the organizations that were central to contemporary religious activism. The study sought to identify organizations that were national in scope, had relatively prominent public profiles, and had large, clean lists of their members/affiliates. This consultation revealed that it made most sense to conduct two separate surveys: one survey of progressive religious activists and another of conservative religious activists. This division also made sense for substantive reasons because somewhat different questions were relevant to progressive and conservative religious activists. More importantly, the consultation produced considerable agreement about the major organizations that fit these criteria and constitute the rival religious activist corps.

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<sup>9</sup> For examples of this approach, see (Green, Guth, Smidt, and Kellstedt 1996).

Second, random samples of members/participants were sought from the major organizations identified. In some cases, organizations generously made random samples available to study, and in other cases public records were used for this sampling. A total of six organizations were sampled for the progressive religious activist survey, and a total of four organizations were sampled for the conservative religious activist survey.<sup>10</sup>

Third, two additional samples of activists based on political activities were included to compare with the organizational members/participants: a sample of clergy and other religious professionals who made federal campaign contributions in 2008 and a sample of publically available leaders of local faith-based advocacy groups.<sup>11</sup> A comparison of these additional samples to the organizational samples revealed a great deal of similarity, providing additional confidence in the organizational sampling strategy.

### ***Responses and Weighting***

The random samples of 4,200 progressive activists and 3,000 conservative activists were sent a ten-page mail survey in the spring and summer of 2009.<sup>12</sup> Mailing and data collection was supervised by John Green at the University of Akron. Analysis was conducted jointly by John Green of the University of Akron and Robert P. Jones and Daniel Cox of Public Religion Research. The mailings produced 1,886 usable responses from the progressive sample (for a response rate of 52% excluding undeliverable mail) and 1,123 usable returns from the conservative sample (for a response rate of 45% excluding undeliverable mail). Response rates varied somewhat by sub-sample, but a careful comparison of the sub-sample responses to the original mailing lists found no major discrepancies. The standard margin of error due to sampling is plus or minus 2.3 percentage points for the progressive survey results and plus or minus 3 percentage points for the conservative survey results.

The sub-sample results were then weighted together on the basis of the relative size of the organizations and activities from which the samples were drawn. Thus, respondents from larger groups played a larger role than those from smaller ones in the final results. This weighting produces an estimate of the characteristics of the conservative and progressive religious activist corps in American politics. Although these data are likely to capture the center of the religious activist corps, they may not capture its full range.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Examples of the progressive groups included are the Interfaith Alliance and Sojourners; examples of the conservative groups are Concerned Women for America and the National Right to Life Committee.

<sup>11</sup> The campaign contributors came from the records of the Federal Election Commission, and the organizational leaders from databases of religious advocacy organizations.

<sup>12</sup> Each of the surveys included four mailings employing the technique described in (Dilman 2006).

<sup>13</sup> For example, the progressive religious activists sample contained only 2% African American respondents, certainly underestimating the impact of African American religious activists in progressive politics. This result is due at least in part to the unique way in which African Americans organize and participate in politics through church structures on the one hand and political organizations such as the NAACP on the other, rather than through national

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religious activist organizations, on which this study focused. Similar patterns may be at work on conservative activists, where racial and ethnic minorities appear to be involved in public affairs through church and church-related organizations.

## APPENDIX B. ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### ***John C. Green, Ph.D.***

John C. Green is the director of the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron, a post he has held since 1988. He is Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Akron. Green received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Cornell University in 1983 and his B.A. in Economics from the University of Colorado in 1975. Before 1988, he taught Political Science at Furman University.

Dr. Green has done extensive research on American religion and politics. He is author of *The Faith Factor: How Religion Influences American Elections* (Praeger, 2007), and co-author of *The Diminishing Divide: Religion's Changing Role in American Politics* (Brookings Institution Press, 2000), *The Bully Pulpit: The Politics of Protestant Clergy* (University Press of Kansas, 1997), and *Religion and the Culture Wars* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1996).

### ***Robert P. Jones, Ph.D.***

Dr. Jones is president of Public Religion Research, an independent research and education organization specializing in work at the intersection of religion, values, and public life. His latest book is *Progressive & Religious: How Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist Leaders are Moving Beyond the Culture Wars and Transforming American Public Life* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008) and numerous article on religion and politics. He sits on the national steering committee for the Religion and Politics Group at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and is an active member of the Society of Christian Ethics (SCE) and the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR).

Prior to founding Public Religion Research, Dr. Jones served the founding director of the Center for American Values in Public Life at People for the American Way Foundation and as assistant professor of religious studies at Missouri State University. Dr. Jones holds a Ph.D. in religion from Emory University, and an M.Div. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

### ***Daniel Cox***

Daniel Cox is Director of Research for Public Religion Research. He brings extensive experience in surveying religious groups in the United States. Prior to joining Public Religion Research, Mr. Cox worked as a Research Associate at the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. In 2007, he was part of the core research team for the groundbreaking Religious Landscape Survey, a large public opinion survey on religion

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