

Evangelicals resist Obama's childhood obesity push

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WASHINGTON (RNS) Evangelicals are the only major religious group where a majority opposes the federal government's efforts to reduce childhood obesity, a Pew Research Center survey shows.

Asked if the government should play a significant role in reducing childhood obesity, 56 percent of white evangelicals said it should not, compared to 42 percent who said it should.

Overall, 57 percent of Americans favored such a government role while 39 percent did not.

First lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" initiative has drawn both praise and criticism from conservatives, and divided potential GOP presidential candidates, with former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee supporting it and former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin opposed.

Other groups viewed a government role more favorably, including 61 percent of Catholics and religiously unaffiliated Americans, 75 percent of black Protestants and 51 percent of white mainline Protestants.

Obama expanded her "Let's Move" initiative to include congregations last November and marked its one-year anniversary in February at an evangelical church outside Atlanta.

The survey by the Pew Center for the People & the Press was conducted Feb. 22-March 1 with a national sample of 1,504 adults, and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.