

Impact possible, hard to gauge, says analyst: Progressive religious leaders' advocacy efforts

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Carefully worded, sometimes stinging critiques by progressive religious leaders aiming at White House proposals and bills in Congress are proliferating. The advice is offered in news releases, press conferences and special events in the heart of Washington. But are they likely to budge, or even nudge, any elected officials?

“It is hard to be sure how much impact any of these things actually have,” says religion-and-politics analyst John C. Green. “But this question is not limited to religious progressives—one can raise the same question about religious conservatives.

“One very important avenue for influence is mobilizing religious constituencies to put pressure on the government and media,” Green told the Century. Liberal-to-moderate churches have not been very successful in this regard over the last couple of decades, but that “may be changing,” he said.

“We saw some evidence in the 2004 election that less traditionally religious people voted at higher rates and voted heavily for John Kerry,” said Green, referring to a postelection survey conducted at the University of Akron (Ohio). “In most major denominations, less traditional congregants are about as numerous as traditionalists. So it is possible that the efforts of progressive activists did—and could—resonate with a mass constituency.”