

Conservative PAC sues Biden administration, targets liberal Catholics

by [Jack Jenkins](#) in the [March 9, 2022](#) issue

The conservative political action committee CatholicVote is suing President Joe Biden's administration in an effort to secure records of communication between the US government and Catholic groups in regard to both humanitarian aid at the southern border and recent abortion debates.

Using a pair of lawsuits, both filed on February 4, CatholicVote aims to force the government to respond to Freedom of Information Act requests submitted by the PAC in September.

The first suit is focused on government-supported humanitarian efforts at the border between the United States and Mexico in Texas, where an array of Catholic groups have long offered assistance to immigrants. The second concerns communication between government officials and a number of Catholic leaders related to controversial abortion laws in Texas and Mississippi.

In the first lawsuit, CatholicVote—which has no formal ties to the Catholic Church—and its partner Judicial Watch requested that the Departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services provide “all communications between the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol” and five Catholic groups or leaders.

The lawsuit appears primarily focused on the work of Norma Pimentel, a Catholic sister who formed a respite center for immigrants in 2014 where volunteers at Catholic Charities provide migrants with temporary relief—typically after they are released by Border Patrol and awaiting transportation elsewhere.

Pimentel's work aiding immigrants during the child migrant crisis under former president Barack Obama's administration has drawn attention and accolades from Democrats and Republicans alike. She has been referred to as Pope Francis's “favorite nun” because of her work, and the pontiff singled her out for praise in 2015. Three years later, she was awarded the Laetare Medal from the University of Notre Dame—considered the highest honor in the American Catholic Church.

A spokesperson for CatholicVote did not immediately respond to requests for comment. But CatholicVote president Brian Burch spoke to Fox News on February 9.

“American Catholics deserve to know the full extent of the US government’s role in funding and coordinating with Catholic Church affiliated agencies at the border, and what role these agencies played in the record surge of illegal immigrants over the past year,” Burch told the network.

Judicial Watch president Tom Fitton suggested to Fox News that the effort is spurred in part by reports that Pimentel or Catholic Charities, which receives federal funds, helped a small number of immigrants acquire bus or airline tickets in the US.

The second suit filed by CatholicVote calls for the government to respond to an FOIA request seeking communications between the solicitor general at the US Department of Justice and a slate of Catholic groups and leaders regarding controversial abortion laws in Texas and Mississippi.

CatholicVote’s lawsuit asks for any related communications between the government and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, as well as with various liberal-leaning bishops.

In addition, CatholicVote asks for any communications between the government and Faith in Action, a multifaith group that often advocates for liberal-leaning causes; Catholics for Choice, a group that supports abortion rights; Tom Perriello, a onetime Democratic congressman and executive director for US programs at Open Society Foundations; Carol Keehan, former head of the Catholic Health Association; and John Carr, codirector of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University.

Debate over the abortion laws has triggered passionate religious outcry, with faith leaders expressing a wide spectrum of views.

Religious opponents and backers of the Mississippi law rallied outside the Supreme Court while justices heard oral arguments in the case in December, and while faith voices have celebrated the Texas law, one of the legal challenges against it includes clergy as plaintiffs, who argue its restrictions amount to an affront to their religious freedom. —Religion News Service