News
Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America, shouts pro-life slogans through a b

Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America, shouts pro-life slogans through a bullhorn in front of the Supreme Court building during the March for Life Jan. 25, 2014, in Washington. The groups will hold protests in seven cities throughout the country June 16. (CNS/Daniel Sone)



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One of the nation's largest pro-life advocacy groups, Students for Life of America, will hold protests in seven cities throughout the country on June 16 urging on an effort by U.S. Catholic bishops who seek to deny President Joe Biden Communion over his support for abortion rights.

The campaign is timed to coincide with the opening of the U.S. Catholic bishops' three-day meeting, where they will vote on whether to proceed with drafting a document on the Eucharist that could suggest that pro-choice Catholic politicians be barred from the sacrament.

While some Catholic bishops have suggested that the nature of the document is not partisan nor intended to directly target the nation's second Catholic president, the Students for Life of America campaign states: "Christians are rising up to call for

President Biden to be held accountable by his Catholic Church leaders."

Led by Catholic convert and former Donald J. Trump For President Pro-life Coalition co-chair Kristan Hawkins, the nonprofit organization, which brought in over $12 million dollars in contributions in 2019, aims to mobilize campus outreach initiatives in support of the pro-life movement.

In a press release about the June 16 rallies, the organization said it has targeted seven cities, five of which they are rallying in support of bishops whom they believe to be faithful to the pro-life cause and two they believe they need to "Rally and Encourage ... to protect the Catholic faith."

The two bishops whom they have identified that need to be encouraged to uphold Catholic teaching are Washington Cardinal Wilton Gregory and Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich.

As Biden's local bishop, who under the church's canon law has the decision-making authority on the issue, Gregory has said he will not deny Biden Communion. Both he and Cupich are close allies of Pope Francis and despite being singled out by Students for Life of America, the two have both spoken at pro-life marches.

Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago speaks in Daley Plaza Jan. 11, 2020, during the city's annua

Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago speaks in Daley Plaza Jan. 11, 2020, during the city's annual March for Life. (CNS/Chicago Catholic/Karen Callaway)

In an interview with The Hill, Hawkins said the groups specifically wanted to make sure Gregory "heard from us."

"When it comes to high-ranking politicians, they give them special privilege or something, or a special pass, and it's completely outrageous," she said.

Hawkins has previously criticized Francis, saying that his 2018 apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* played "right into the hands of abortion activists" by warning against treating abortion as more important than other pro-life issues, such as caring for the poor and elderly.

The bishops whom the group intends to "thank and encourage leaders for their pro-life stance" are New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan; Los Angeles Archbishop José

Gomez, who is president of the U.S. bishops' conference; Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas; San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone; and Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas.

Among the Students for Life of America board are a number of major backers of former President Trump, most notably Leonard Leo and Greg Mueller.

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Leo is a legal activist and past vice-president of the Federalist Society, and has led efforts to seat a number of justices on the Supreme Court and shepherded scores of other judicial appointments throughout the country. He is also currently backing the Honest Elections Project, one of a number of organizations, many led by Catholic pro-life philanthropists, aiming to restrict voter access following the 2020 election.

Mueller, a communications executive, is a long-time collaborator of Leo's and the two men together run CRC Advisors, which aims to fund conservative causes and target judicial appointments.

In addition to the in-person rallies on June 16, the organization is encouraging supporters to write to current U.S. bishops' conference president Gomez directly expressing their concerns about Biden and Communion and to print tithing slips "to leave in their church collection baskets sharing their concerns with their pastors."

While the U.S. bishops will begin their three-day meeting on June 16, the discussion and vote on the Communion document is slated to take place on June 17.

This story appears in the **Bishops, Biden and Communion** feature series. View the full series.