News



This combination of photos shows President Joe Biden, left, and Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump during a presidential debate hosted by CNN, June 27, 2024, in Atlanta. (AP/Gerald Herbert)

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During his campaign to return to the White House, Donald Trump promised to return Christians to power and prominence in American life and to root out any anti-Christian policies in the federal government.

Not long after taking office, Trump ordered cabinet members to form a task force to eliminate anti-Christian bias in their departments.

"My Administration will not tolerate anti-Christian weaponization of government or unlawful conduct targeting Christians," Trump wrote in an executive order dated Feb. 6.

A report, dated June 6 but made public this week, from the task force now alleges that there was a "consistent and systematic pattern of discrimination against Christians during the Biden Administration." In support of that claim, the report cites fines issued against two major Christian universities, arrests of abortion clinic protesters and mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations and testing in government agencies as proof of bias against Christians.

The report also claims that investigating churches for violating the so-called Johnson Amendment, a rule that bars nonprofits from taking sides in elections, is a sign of bias and argued that some agencies created a hostile work environment toward Christians.

Many of the incidents in the report were previously reported by conservative media or referred to by conservative activist groups during the Biden administration, including an FBI memo that warned of the alleged dangers posed by "radical traditionalist" Catholics.

The report also listed a series of disputes between private companies and workers over religion as signs of bias. Those included a pair of flight attendants fired by Alaska Airlines allegedly over their disagreement with the company over support of LGBTQ+ rights. The flight attendants are currently suing the airline with the help of

the First Liberty Institute, a pro-Trump evangelical law firm. The report also recounts the case of an Iowa man fired for wearing T-shirts with Bible verses on them, who was also represented by a conservative Christian legal group.

Along with recounting alleged discrimination under the Biden administration, the report touts efforts by the Trump administration to come to the aid of Christians. That includes pardoning a group of anti-abortion protesters who were imprisoned for allegedly violating the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act after a protest in Tennessee.

Paul Vaughn, one of the protesters, spoke to the task force during a meeting to recount his story of anti-Christian bias, according to the report.

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Michael Farris, a pro-homeschooling lawyer, also met with the task force, claiming his church in Texas was investigated for allegedly violating the Johnson Amendment. That church, Cornerstone Chapel, later sued the IRS over the investigation, along with another church and a group of religious broadcasters. Earlier this year, in a proposed settlement, the IRS said it would no longer seek to enforce a ban on pastors who endorse candidates in sermons.

Scott Hicks, provost of Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, told the task force that his school, along with Grand Canyon University, a Christian college in Phoenix, was targeted by the Biden administration. Liberty University was fined $14 million in 2024 for violating the Clery Act, which governs how schools report crimes on campus. In 2023, Grand Canyon was fined $37.7 million for allegedly lying to students about the cost of graduate programs. The Grand Canyon fine was later rescinded by the Trump administration. Grand Canyon has denied any wrongdoing.

Liberty agreed to the terms in a settlement.

Hicks told the task force that the schools — two of the largest evangelical schools in the country — were likely singled out due to their Christian worldviews, according to the report.

The report also highlighted a dispute between federal officials and a Catholic hospital system in Oklahoma over a candle in a chapel. Federal officials allegedly

threatened to ban the hospital from Medicare and other programs unless the candle, seen as a fire hazard, was put out. The government relented after a lawyer from the Beckett Fund for Religious Liberty, sent a letter saying the government had previously ignored local fire safety rules and had refused to give the hospital a religious exemption.

In other findings, the task force report found the Treasury Department allowed financial institutions to "debank" Christian groups and that the IRS scrutinized the tax-exempt applications of Christian groups seeking nonprofit status. It also said the Department of Veterans Affairs reviewed 500 allegations of anti-Christian bias, including the denial of exemptions to vaccine mandates, providing abortion services and "mandating training inconsistent with Christian views."

The task force report also listed actions taken by Trump officials to address anti-Christian bias, including filing a lawsuit against an Idaho town for allegedly discriminating in a zoning dispute with a new church tied to Christian nationalist pastor Doug Wilson, intervening in several other zoning disputes involving churches and charging the Civil Rights Division with enforcing protections for pregnancy counseling centers. The Department of Justice also plans to issue new guidance on prayer in schools.

Four different lawsuits have been filed against the Trump administration by Christian denominations, organizations and other faith groups after the administration rescinded a policy discouraging immigration raids at houses of worship, arguing the change violates freedom of assembly guaranteed under the First Amendment and rights outlined by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the Administrative Procedure Act. The administration is also facing at least two other lawsuits related to its ban on refugees and its cancellation of contracts with faith-based groups, including Christian organizations, that resettle refugees for the federal government, RNS previously reported.

The task force report ends by repeating claims that the Biden administration discriminated against Christians and promising to end such discrimination.

"By eradicating anti-Christian bias in the federal government," the report states, "the Task Force is reaffirming a principle older than the Republic itself, that freedom of religion is not granted by government but guaranteed against it."

This story appears in the **Trump's Second Term** feature series. View the full series.