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By Eireann Van Natta

The Biden administration is using a novel application of an 1870 statute to enhance the sentences of peaceful abortion protesters, data provided exclusively to the Daily Caller confirms.

In the 30-year history of the Freedom of Access to Clinics (FACE) Act, the Biden Department of Justice (DOJ) in just over three years has levied over a quarter of the law's total charges, most of which have carried this novel sentence enhancement, the data also shows.

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The data, along with the unprecedented enhancement, provide fuel to criticisms from conservatives that the Biden admin is unfairly targeting pro-lifers and using the DOJ for political ends.

In some instances under previous administrations, threatening to harm or kill a clinic

employee carried less severe punishments. Under Biden's, however, elderly women peacefully protesting an abortion clinic have faced much harsher consequences. After the Supreme Court's Roe vs Wade decision leak in 2022, hundreds of attacks were waged against pro-life pregnancy centers and churches, but the DOJ has only prosecuted five individuals for such offenses.

From 1994 to 2024, there were 205 cases against pro-life activists and only six against abortion activists, data provided to the Caller by Republican Texas Rep. Chip Roy's office reveals. Prosecutions of pro-life individuals constitute roughly 97% of all FACE Act cases.

At least 55 of those cases were prosecuted during the Biden administration, only five of which involved attacks on pregnancy resource centers. In less than four years, Biden's DOJ has accounted for over a quarter of all FACE prosecutions and approximately 24% of cases targeting pro-life activists, the data demonstrates.

The FACE Act became law in 1994 and prohibits "violent, threatening, damaging, and obstructive conduct intended to injure, intimidate, or interfere with the right to seek, obtain or provide reproductive health services," <u>according</u> to the DOJ. The law also applies to pro-life pregnancy resource centers and places of worship. (US Army Base Holds Training Class Calling Pro Life Orgs Terrorist Attacks)

Some <u>claim</u>, however, the Biden Administration is weaponizing FACE against individuals who protest abortion. In the past two years, FBI agents raided the homes of pro-life activists Mark Houck and Paul Vaughn (the former being <u>acquitted</u> and the latter <u>escaping</u> prison time) during Biden's presidency.

When you start putting people in jail for praying, it's pretty clear who you're actually working for. Paul Vaughn is facing 11 years in Biden's prisons.

pic.twitter.com/X54sysL5w0

— Tucker Carlson (@TuckerCarlson) March 26, 2024

FACE "has been politicized and abused to target peaceful pro-life advocates," while

activists "who violently attacked" pro-life clinics walk free, Erin Hawley, Vice President of the Center for Life and Regulatory Practice at the Alliance for Defending Freedom (ADF), told the Daily Caller.

She explained how the DOJ <u>prosecuted</u> at least 26 pro-life individuals in 2022 but zero activists "who obstructed or vandalized pregnancy care centers."

In 2023, Roy and Republican Utah Sen. Mike Lee introduced legislation to repeal the FACE Act.

"Biden's Department of Justice has brazenly weaponized the FACE Act against normal, everyday Americans across the political spectrum, simply because they are pro-life," Roy stated in a press release.

The Caller reached out to the DOJ, but they did not answer questions about FACE directly, instead pointing to its <u>website</u>. The DOJ told the Caller to contact the FBI for more information regarding investigations into attacks on pregnancy centers and churches.

The FBI did not respond in time for publication, although in 2022, the agency told <u>The Daily Signal</u> it was investigating attacks on pregnancy resource centers and churches. The FBI would not share if it had arrested anyone in relation to the attacks.

"They are extreme on reproductive freedom."

Meanwhile, over 50 pro-life organizations and centers have been attacked or vandalized since the Roe leak (according to <u>@CatholicVote</u> tracker).
https://t.co/jKxIN8XCfk

— Mary Margaret Olohan (@MaryMargOlohan) July 27, 2022

From May 2022 to March 2024, there were at least 90 attacks on pro-life organizations and pregnancy resource centers, according to <u>CatholicVote</u>, which tracks attacks by abortion activists. The data is gathered from news reports, direct tips and public information the attackers posted online.

Many of the incidents appear to be associated with the pro-abortion groups <u>Jane's</u> <u>Revenge</u> and <u>Ruth Sent Us</u>. Since May 2020, there have been over 400 attacks on Catholic churches, the website <u>reports</u>. (<u>RELATED</u>: <u>While Biden DOJ Locks Up Pro-</u>

Lifers, Hundreds Of Pro-Abortion Violent Incidents Still Remain Unprosecuted)

"Congress ought to repeal [FACE] immediately," the Thomas More Society's Senior Counsel, Steve Crampton, told the Caller. Crampton represented Vaughn during his FACE trial.

Video of the FBI's arrest of Paul Vaughn of Centerville, Tennessee. DOJ charged him with "conspiracy against rights secured by the FACE Act, and committing FACE Act violations" for blocking the entrance to an abortion clinic. Paul tells me the footage was taken by his wife. pic.twitter.com/KSDvLRSrlF

— Mary Margaret Olohan (@MaryMargOlohan) October 7, 2022

Crampton stated unequivocally that pro-life protests have not increased in aggression during the post-Roe era.

He said there was a lack of "hardcore" protests by pro-life activists after the Dobbs decision and contrasted that with the hundreds of attacks against churches and pro-life pregnancy centers.

Organizations like the National Abortion Federation (NAF) claimed attacks on abortion clinics <u>increased</u> in 2022. The NAF's statistics are based on reports from facility members. A NAF report stated there was an increase in "clinic invasions," or individuals who "fake appointments," "force their way into the clinic" and "refuse to leave."

They reported 20 clinic invasions in 2022. From 2020 to 2022, there were zero reported murders, attempted murders and bombings at abortion clinics. There were four reported incidents of arson and 101 acts of vandalism in 2022, though.

The Crime Prevention Center (CPC) also conducted a <u>study</u> in 2022, but it showed prolife groups experienced over 22 times more violence than pro-choice organizations. CPC identified 135 attacks on pro-life groups from the date of the Supreme Court leak to September 24, 2022. There were only six cases concerning pro-choice groups. CPC said NAF's 2021 report failed to provide a list of cases to substantiate the data.

FBI Director Chris Wray defends the FBI sending 30 agents to arrest pro-life activist Mark Houck in front of his family but doing nothing about BLM activists who torch federal buildings:

"We have one standard which is irrespective of ideology or politics."

pic.twitter.com/b8CDcfmMK1

— Greg Price (@greg_price11) March 1, 2023

Crampton argued there has not been an increase in pro-life protests, nonviolent or otherwise. He stated only a small percentage of pro-life individuals engage in demonstrations at abortion clinics.

He also noted how "for the first time in history," Biden's DOJ added underlying charges, specifically the felony Conspiracy Against Rights charge, to FACE Act prosecutions.

The Conspiracy Against Rights law <u>prohibits</u> two or more people from "conspir[ing] to injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate" anyone exercising their constitutional rights. A violation of the law is punishable by fines and up to 10 years in prison, providing there is no kidnapping or sexual assault.

Crampton explained how the original purpose of the law – enacted in 1870 – was to protect newly enfranchised African American voters, but the Biden Administration "twisted" it to target peaceful pro-life activists exercising their First Amendment rights. Moreover, after the Dobbs <u>decision</u>, he said there was no constitutional right to an abortion.

President Bill Clinton <u>nominated</u> D.C.-based Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly in 1997. She has <u>sentenced</u> at least nine defendants during Biden's presidency, each time delivering severe punishments.

The Biden administration charged those defendants in 2022 with allegedly obstructing access to an abortion clinic in Washington, D.C. Each protester faced up to 11 years in prison, three years of supervised release and fines of up to \$350,000, according to a DOJ <u>press release</u>.

The demonstrators <u>protested</u> the Washington Surgi-Clinic abortionist, Cesare Santangelo, who was accused of violating federal law by allegedly performing partial-birth abortions. Activists with the group Progressive Anti-Abortion Uprising reportedly found five fetuses — which appeared to be victims of late term abortions — in a box of 115 fetuses outside the clinic.

Pro-life organizations and five House Republicans in 2024 called for investigations into

the five abortions.

One demonstrator at the clinic was a 75 year-old woman, Paulette "Paula" Harlow. Kollar-Kotelly sentenced her to 24 months in prison for allegedly violating FACE and the Conspiracy Against Rights law by attending the demonstration, according to a DOJ <u>press release</u>. Another defendant, Lauren Handy, was sentenced to almost five years in prison.

JUST IN: Pro-lifer Lauren Handy sentenced to nearly 5 years in prison for "blockading" a Washington abortion clinic in 2020.

After she was indicted, police found 5 fetuses in her Washinton home.

According to prosecutors, Handy instructed co-defendants to chain themselves... <u>pic.twitter.com/WMyeEVPxrz</u>

— Collin Rugg (@CollinRugg) May 14, 2024

Harlow's husband expressed concerns about his wife's health to the judge. The judge told Harlow that she should try to "remain alive" because it's a "tenet of [her] religion," <u>according</u> to LiveAction.

Past <u>sentences</u> under previous administrations demonstrate the unprecedented severity of the current punishments. (RELATED: Biden DOJ Hits Five Pro-Life Activists

- Three Already Facing Prison For Blocking Abortion Clinic - With New Lawsuit)

During Clinton's presidency, a self-proclaimed "anti-abortion activist" named J. Fred Hart, Jr. allegedly parked two trucks at an abortion clinic and blocked "vehicular access" to parking in 1997. The trucks were similar to the vehicle used in the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City, according to the DOJ. Bomb squads and arson experts investigated the trucks and determined they were empty. Hart was sentenced to four years probation (home detention for the first year), 200 hours of community service, mental health counseling, and a "special assessment" of \$50.

In 2010, under President Obama's DOJ, a man named Donald Hertz allegedly called an abortion clinic and threatened to kill a doctor and his family members. Hertz was sentenced to five years of probation, <u>according</u> to the San Diego Union-Tribune.

Crampton said that without question punishments for violating FACE are harsher under Biden, pointing to the DOJ's Reproductive Rights Task Force. He observed how the DOJ has yet to establish a Religious Rights Task Force, despite recent attacks on churches.

In July of 2022, shortly after Roe was overturned, the DOJ established the Reproductive Rights Task Force to "protect access to reproductive health care." The task force aims to keep tabs on legislation and "enforcement actions" that threaten abortion access, according to a <u>press release</u>.

Yesterday, AG Merrick Garland shared an update on the DOJ's Reproductive Rights Task Force's efforts to defend reproductive freedoms that are protected by federal law.

Read more: https://t.co/PGAoS2NjvN pic.twitter.com/m69jzZvXpy

— U.S. Department of Justice (@TheJusticeDept) <u>December 5, 2023</u>

"The 'Reproductive Rights' task force is just a name they gave to a group that is pushing a pro-abortion agenda," Hawley told the Caller.

Hawley linked to the DOJ's <u>website</u> and noted that enforcing the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) was one of the purported objectives.

The Biden administration tried to use EMTALA to "force emergency room doctors to perform abortions that are illegal under Idaho law," <u>according</u> to the ADF's assessment of the State of Idaho v. The United States of America.

Today, Idaho stood up for life and the rule of law—and we were proud to stand with them.

Speaking before the U.S. Supreme Court, the Idaho Attorney General's office eloquently defended the constitutional principles at stake.

"The [Biden] administration's position ultimately is...

pic.twitter.com/fmuo8fnDJO

— Alliance Defending Freedom (@ADFLegal) April 24, 2024

Hawley said the task force's other objectives include enforcement of FACE and protecting abortion-inducing medication.

"Rather than abusing its power to target pro-life pregnancy centers, the DOJ should be protecting them and ensuring that women have access to real support and real healthcare," Hawley emphasized.

Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at the DOJ – Kristen Clarke – spearheads the National Task Force On Violence Against Reproductive Health Care Providers. It was established in 1998 after the shooting of an abortionist. Clark <u>labeled</u> the ADF a "hate group" and characterized Liberty University as a "fundamentalist Christian school" in 2018.

This separate task force coordinates with law enforcement and U.S. Attorneys' Offices (USAOs) to investigate "incidents of abortion violence," even though FACE ostensibly provides protections for pregnancy resource centers.

Eleven defendants – including Paul Vaughn – were charged on Oct. 5 2022, with allegedly using "force and physical obstruction" at a clinic in Mount Juliet, Tennessee, according to the DOJ. They faced the same harsh punishments, including up to 10 and half years in prison, \$260,000 in fines and three years of supervised release.

Paul Vaughn ultimately <u>escaped</u> prison time, but it was a pyrrhic victory. Vaughn is now a convicted felon stripped of his right to vote and obtain a firearm, according to Crampton. He must answer to his probation officer and is also under house arrest.

Paul Vaughn, unjustly prosecuted by the Biden DOJ, has been spared prison time.

READ PRESS RELEASE: https://t.co/ThNSiRNQT3 pic.twitter.com/u1jJYcmWse

— Thomas More Society (@ThomasMoreSoc) July 2, 2024

The FACE Act applies to places of worship and pregnancy centers. The vast majority of prosecutions under the law, however, have targeted pro-life activists.

This past June, the DOJ <u>sued</u> five people for allegedly violating FACE by obstructing an abortion clinic in Florida.
Crampton said the law was not neutral.
"It was always about abortion."
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