

Meeting to Discuss Possible Religious Freedom Litigation January 22, 2024

Meeting notes by Wendy Clemmer

The lawsuit stems from President Trump's recent revocation of the Sensitive Policy, which now allows ICE to enter church buildings and make public arrests. ICAP (the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy & Protection) plans to file the lawsuit by February 1st, and organizations need to determine whether they will join as plaintiffs as soon as possible. There are no fees to be passed to the organizations.

Challenges: Churches cannot individually file the lawsuit, as doing so would put them at risk of becoming targets, which could jeopardize the safety of their undocumented congregants. This is why ICAP is reaching out to denominational leaders. One leader shared concerns about their ability to sign on, as it could conflict with their polity. Some churches are against the arrest of undocumented persons, while others support it.

Trump's actions affect religious rights at churches, potentially making congregations feel unsafe, which could lead to decreased attendance.

Organizations present at the meeting:

- American Baptist Churches
- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina
- Center on Faith and Justice
- Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas
- Fellowship Southwest
- American Baptist Home Mission Societies
- Baptist General Association of Virginia
- Alliance of Baptist
- North American Baptist Conference
- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty

Next steps: If ABC decides to be a plaintiff, there will be paperwork to complete ASAP:

- Denomination Questionnaire – completed by ABCUSA leadership,
- Individual Church Questionnaire - 3-7 member churches that would be well-positioned to establish the burden the rescission would impose on religious exercise

If not, there will be other ways to offer support, though these options were not discussed in detail during the meeting.