

US Catholic Church received at least \$1.4 billion through “small business” loan program

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An Associated Press (AP) analysis of the federal loan data grudgingly released by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin last Monday revealed that one of largest recipients of government funds funneled through the fraudulent Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) is the US Roman Catholic Church, which received at least \$1.4 billion.

This staggering amount is a drastic undercount due to the fact that the US Small Business Administration declined to release information on loans approved for under \$150,000.

In addition to the Catholic Church, other religious organizations including Protestant churches, Muslim mosques and Jewish synagogues also helped themselves to government funds, violating the First Amendment’s establishment of the separation of church and state.

This includes churches connected to President Donald Trump such as the City of Destiny in Florida and its pastor Paula White-Cain, which received a loan worth between \$150,000 and \$350,000 through the PPP. White-Cain serves as Trump’s personal pastor and as “White House faith adviser.”

While the AP notes that Catholic dioceses, parishes, schools and other ministries received approval for at least 3,500 forgivable loans, the Diocesan Fiscal Management Conference, an organization of Catholic financial officers, surveyed their membership and found that roughly 9,000 Catholic entities received loans, nearly three times what the AP was able to uncover.

Coupled with the variance in reporting limits, the AP speculated it is possible that the Church as whole may have received as much, or more, than \$3.5 billion in loans, which can be converted into grants if a majority of the funds are shown to have been used to cover wages, rent and utilities.

Terrified of growing socialist consciousness in the working class and under conditions in which states across the country are slashing funding for public education, the US ruling class and their political pawns are funneling billions to the Catholic Church and its schools.

Prior to the passage of the CARES Act and with it the PPP, religious and faith-based organizations were not eligible to receive funding through the US Small Business Administration (SBA). However, after successful lobbying by groups connected to the Church spent at least \$50,000, Congress helpfully slipped in a provision within the CARES Act which allowed religious organizations and other “nonprofits” the ability to siphon funds from the program.

The PPP has been championed by the administration and both big business parties as a vital lifeline for “Main Street businesses” and according to Mnuchin is responsible for “saving 51 million jobs.”

In reality, last week marked the fifteenth week in a row in which more than 1 million new unemployment claims were filed, on top of 18.1 million continuing claims. The official unemployment rate, artificially deflated by the Trump administration, is still above 11 percent and at least 70,000 small businesses have already declared they will lay off “10 workers or more” once funding for the PPP runs out. This will add at least another 700,000 people to the ranks of the unemployed, as reported by the National Federation of Independent Businesses two weeks ago.

In addition to Congress granting eligibility for religious organizations to apply for the loans through the SBA, the Trump administration also waived the restriction that prevented applicants from receiving a loan if the applicant employed more than 500 workers per physical location. According to the online Catholic news service Crux, in a late April phone call, hosted by Trump and attended by several hundred Catholic leaders, Trump boasted that he was the “best [president] the Catholic Church has ever seen.”

Among the Catholic entities that received millions of dollars in taxpayer funded loans was the Archdiocese of New York, which received 15 loans worth at least \$28 million, just for its top executive offices. The diocese was also approved for at least a \$1 million dollar loan for St. Patrick’s Cathedral, located on Fifth Avenue.

On the West Coast, the Los Angeles archdiocese received at least 37 loans worth between \$9 and \$23 million. Four loans worth at least \$3 million were approved in Orange County, California, where the Church recently completed renovation of the \$70 million dollar “Crystal Cathedral.” The sprawling property features water fountains, the fifth largest pipe organ in the world and a 236-foot stainless-steel mirrored spire standing over 18 stories tall.

Elsewhere, a loan of at least \$2 million was approved for the Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia, diocese, where an internal Church investigation last year confirmed allegations that then Bishop Michael Bransfield groped children and misused church funds for personal vacations, alcohol and luxury goods.

The AP report noted at least 40 dioceses, which have paid out millions of dollars in compensation to victims of Church abuses, received at least \$200 million in PPP funds.

The Saint Luke Institute, located in Silver Spring, Maryland, is a Catholic treatment center for priests accused of sexual abuse. Often used as a stopover for pedophile priests waiting to be transferred to new parishes, the institute received a loan worth between \$350,000 and \$1 million.

Catholic Charities USA, whose motto is “working to reduce poverty in America,” spent \$30,000 lobbying Congress to ensure the “charity” network would be eligible for funds. Their efforts were handsomely rewarded; Catholic Charities USA was approved for about 100 loans worth between \$90 and \$220 million according to the data.

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The AP found that overall, roughly 500 loans exceeding \$1 million were approved to entities connected to the Catholic Church and at least eight loans were approved for the maximum amount of funding, between \$5 million and \$10 million.

Among the loan recipients were also ten groups designated by the Southern Poverty Law Center as “hate groups,” such as the anti-LGBT American Family Association (AFA), which received the largest loan of the ten, worth between \$1 million and \$2 million, to allegedly support 124 jobs.

The AFA, founded by pastor Donald Wildmon in 1977 as the National Federation for Decency before changing its name in 1988, proudly proclaims to be “on the front lines of America’s culture war,” where its goal is to “be a champion of Christian activism” directed toward the “preservation of Marriage and the Family.”

An article written by David Lane and posted July 8 on AFA’s website branded “the official BLM movement” as “downright Jezebelic,” an “alliance between the two devils of Nazism and communism” which accepts “transgenderism, homosexuality, abortion” and “thus [is] in

direct conflict with the Alpha Male Trump.”

Anti-immigrant hate groups tied directly to Trump’s fascistic advisor Stephen Miller have also received funds. These include the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) and the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), both founded by the late John Tanton.

For decades Tanton, a retired Michigan ophthalmologist, played a central role in shaping US immigration policy through FAIR and CIS. Tanton’s racist and eugenic views were exposed in his private papers which are housed at the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan. In a letter to ecology professor Garret Hardin, Tanton admitted, “I’ve come to the point of view that for European-American society and culture to persist requires a European-American majority, and a clear one at that.”

Tanton also ran a racist publishing company, the Social Contract Press, which in 1994 republished the novel *The Camp of Saints*. *Le Camp des Saints*, first published in 1973 by Frenchman Jean Raspail, is a racist fantasy which depicts an invasion of France by a horde of starving, dark-skinned refugees. The book’s republishing came with an endorsement from Tanton and a special afterword from its author which read: “The proliferation of other races dooms our race, my race, to extinction.”

Jon Feere of CIS and Julie Kirchner of FAIR currently serve as policy advisers to Immigration Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Patrol, respectively.



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