



**PRESS RELEASE from the  
LIBERTY JUSTICE CENTER**

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## **Illinois Right to Life sues over ban on gatherings**

CHICAGO (June 24, 2020) — Illinois Right to Life, the state's largest nonprofit, pro-life organization, has filed a federal lawsuit against Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker over his limits on gatherings and overreach of his executive powers.

*Illinois Right to Life v. Pritzker* was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Illinois Right to Life is represented by attorneys from the Liberty Justice Center, the Chicago-based public interest law firm that won the landmark First Amendment case *Janus v. AFSCME* at the U.S. Supreme Court in 2018.

Since March, the governor has placed strict limits on gatherings of greater than 10 individuals. Even when Illinois enters Phase 4, currently scheduled for June 26, crowd sizes will remain limited to 50 people. Although the rate of new COVID-19 cases in Illinois continues to drop, Pritzker has said that limits on gatherings will remain in place until a “vaccine or an effective treatment” is found. The lawsuit centers on the governor’s willingness to excuse certain organizations and First Amendment expressions from the limits in his executive orders, but not the rest of Illinois – including Illinois Right to Life.

“The governor has said it’s ok for some organizations to gather, to fundraise and to rally support around their cause but everyone else faces the threat of police enforcement or being shut down,” said **Mary Kate Knorr, executive director of Illinois Right to Life**. “Our request is simple: Equal treatment under the law. We want to be able to get our message out and do our work just like the other advocacy organizations and social causes that the governor has permitted to do so.”

The issues Illinois Right to Life works on are deeply personal. They are not easily discussed over the internet; in-person, human-to-human interactions are the best ways for the organization to compassionately share its views. But the governor’s executive order prohibits Illinois Right to Life from hosting in-person events and activities. Rallies, workshops, fundraisers and educational programs are rendered impossible. The governor’s restrictions stifle Illinois Right to Life’s ability to share their message with the public.

Meanwhile, the governor has marched in and endorsed the speech of other advocacy groups who have held large-scale rallies in recent weeks.

“Stifling certain organizations’ ability to gather while giving others a free pass is a clear double standard and violation of the U.S. Constitution,” said **Patrick Hughes, president and co-founder of the Liberty Justice Center**. “The First Amendment applies equally to all Illinoisans — not only groups whose political views are supported by Gov. Pritzker. The work and voice of Illinois Right to Life in the public sphere is just as critical and constitutionally-protected as other voices.”

*Illinois Right to Life v. Pritzker* is the third lawsuit the Liberty Justice Center has filed in recent weeks against Gov. Pritzker over constitutional violations during the coronavirus pandemic. First, Liberty Justice Center attorneys represented Salem Media and journalist Amy Jacobson in *Salem Media v. Pritzker* after the governor banned Jacobson from press briefings. In a victory for First Amendment rights, the governor's office reversed its decision and reinstated Jacobson's press credentials. In a second case, the Liberty Justice Center represents the Illinois Republican Party in a challenge on the governor's ban on gatherings. An emergency motion to temporarily stop the enforcement of the governor's ban will be heard in federal court on June 29.

A copy of *Illinois Right to Life v. Pritzker* is available here: <https://libertyjusticecenter.org/media/illinois-right-to-life-v-pritzker>

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The Liberty Justice Center is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public-interest litigation center that represents clients at no charge and was founded to fight against political privilege. The most recent example of the Liberty Justice Center's national success in this arena is its 2018 U.S. Supreme Court victory in *Janus v. AFSCME*. Beyond its work in the *Janus* case, the Liberty Justice Center's talented, liberty-minded attorneys also fight to protect economic liberty, private property rights, free speech, school choice and other fundamental rights. The Liberty Justice Center pursues its goals through strategic, precedent-setting litigation to revitalize constitutional restraints on government power and protections for individual rights. Learn more about the Liberty Justice Center at [LibertyJusticeCenter.org](https://LibertyJusticeCenter.org).