



Sign Up  
| Log In

## CEO of New York Women's Health Center Labels Pro-Life Sidewalk Counselors the 'American Taliban'

JENNI FINK | FEB 20, 2018 | 12:32 PM



0



1



*Columbia GSAPP/Anna Levinzon/Flickr*

During her testimony, Merle Hoffman, CEO of Choices Women's Medical Center in New York, called pro-life sidewalk counselors the “American Taliban.”

According to [Liberty Counsel](#) — which is representing Scott Fitchett Jr., one of the defendants — New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman filed a harassment

lawsuit against 13 people who handed out [pro-life](#) leaflets outside of a women's health center that performs [abortions](#).

On Thursday, while under oath, Hoffman admitted she collaborated with the attorney general in regard to the lawsuit and called the “mere existence” of sidewalk counselors a “crime against women.”

Horatio Mihet, the vice president of legal affairs at Liberty Counsel, who questioned Hoffman, called it “unconscionable” for her to conspire with the attorney general to punish someone for “peacefully preaching truth on a public sidewalk.”

Ahead of her testimony, the [Thomas More Society](#), which is representing another group of defendants, reported that District Judge Carol Bagley Amon called leafleting a “form of really protected speech.”

The state's interpretation of [harassment](#) reportedly deals largely around a person's reaction to someone else's action, which Thomas More special counsel Martin Cannon said proves problematic.

“If harassment is defined by someone's reaction, you can't know you've committed the offense until after the fact,” Cannon said. “If harassment is whatever people in power say it is, we are protected only by sentiment, not by law.”

The Thomas More Society also reported that Amon argued against the prosecution's use of the term “annoying behavior.” She said that if being annoying constituted harassment, “I could sue all of you here today.”

“The prosecution's loose handling of a serious charge suggests the case is solely intended to discourage opposition to abortion,” Cannon said. “There are no instances of the force, threat of force, physical obstruction, following, or harassing that Schneiderman claims to have occurred.”

The New York Daily News [reported](#) that Assistant Attorney General Sandra Pullman previously told Amon that the defendants were free to speak their mind and hand out leaflets but not force their ideas or literature on people.

The lawsuit reportedly states that the sidewalk counselors chased and crowded patients as they approached the building and shouted death threats at staff.

Liberty Counsel reported that the case was set to resume this week.

**Watch: Fergie's National Anthem Rendition at NBA All-Star Game Was so Bad It Set the Internet On Fire**

SHARE ON FACEBOOK



## Jenni Fink

Jenni Fink joined IJR in 2016 as a writer and covers primarily politics and stories about inspiring human beings. She graduated from the University of... [more](#)

---



Michael Fink

Well, when exercising your first amendment rights on the other side of the argument than

Hoffman equ... [See More](#)



1



REPLY

FEATURED

SORT BY: LATEST ▾



## NRA Chief Blames Florida Shooting on FBI, Poor School

### Security, and Failure of Mental Health System

BY WILLIAM STEAKIN - 26 MINUTES AGO

Amid heightened pressure following last week's Florida school shooting, National Rifle Association (NRA) CEO Wayne LaPierre delivered

MENTS - JOIN CONVERSATION



## **Joe Scarborough Praises Trump for Listening Session: 'Thank You, Mr. President ... It Was Remarkable'**

BY WILLIAM STEAKIN - 2 HOURS AGO

"Morning Joe" praised President Donald Trump Thursday morning for allowing school shooting survivors and parents to speak their minds

MENTS - JOIN CONVERSATION



## **Trump: I Never Said 'Give Teachers Guns' ... But 'Attacks Would End' With 'Highly Trained Teachers'**

BY WILLIAM STEAKIN - 3 HOURS AGO

President Donald Trump took to Twitter Thursday morning to clarify remarks he made a day earlier suggesting teachers should carry “a c

MENTS - JOIN CONVERSATION



## Trump Promises 'Very Strong' Background Checks for Gun Buyers in Listening Session

BY KELCEY CAULDER - 16 HOURS AGO

President Donald Trump promised tougher background checks for people buying weapons on Wednesday during a meeting with students, paren

MENTS - JOIN CONVERSATION





## Florida Shooting Survivors Plead to Trump: 'I Want to Feel Safe at School'

BY WILLIAM STEAKIN - 18 HOURS AGO

President Donald Trump held a listening session with Florida shooting survivors, parents, and officials on Wednesday to hear ideas and

COMMENTS - JOIN CONVERSATION



## 'I'm Pissed': Parkland Father Calls on Trump to Fix School

## Security

BY AARON CREDEUR - 19 HOURS AGO

During a listening session at the White House, the father of a victim in last week's school shooting in Parkland, Florida, spoke about

COMMENTS - JOIN CONVERSATION



## Number of US Hate Groups Rose 4 Percent Last Year, 20 Percent Over Last 3 Years

BY KELCEY CAULDER - 19 HOURS AGO

A study from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) released Tuesday said that the number of hate groups within the United States grew

COMMENTS - JOIN CONVERSATION



## Parkland Students March on Florida Capitol to Demand Gun

### Control

BY AARON CREDEUR - 20 HOURS AGO

Survivors of the Parkland, Florida, shooting marched to the state Capitol on Wednesday to meet with elected officials and demand new

|

MENTS - JOIN CONVERSATION



## Bernie Sanders: 'Real Question' Is Why Did Clinton Withhold

### Russian Meddling Information

BY WILLIAM STEAKIN - 20 HOURS AGO

In a new interview on Wednesday, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) raised questions about why the Clinton campaign kept information from the

COMMENTS - JOIN CONVERSATION



## Mueller Files New Charges in Manafort Case Following Bribery

### Rumors

BY KELCEY CAULDER - 20 HOURS AGO

Special counsel Robert Mueller filed new sealed charges in the case against former Trump campaign chair Paul Manafort and aide Rick Ga

COMMENTS - JOIN CONVERSATION