

The *Thomas More Law Center* Case

Case Name: *Thomas More Law Center v. Xavier Becerra*

Case Status: Cert petition filed to U.S. Supreme Court Aug. 26, 2019.

Significance: Whether California’s requirement that nonprofits annually disclose their major donors’ names and addresses to fundraise in the state violates the constitutionally protected freedom of association.



Background: Thomas More Law Center, a nonprofit organization based in Michigan, defends and promotes religious freedom, moral and family values, and the sanctity of human life. Roughly 5 percent of its supporters are California residents, and it has operated as a charity in good standing with California’s attorney general for many years. However, in March 2012, the Attorney General’s Office began to harass the law center and demand the names and addresses of its major donors even though the center’s supporters, clients, and employees have faced intimidation, death threats, hate mail, boycotts, and even an assassination attempt from ideological opponents. California has no regulatory need for requesting the information.

The petition notes that *NAACP v. Alabama*—which protected NAACP supporters from being targeted by white supremacists—has protected freedom of association for over 60 years, and today’s environment is no time to remove that key safeguard. Further, the California Attorney General’s office has a history of posting supporter’ information online and offers no protection against employees, contractors, or summer interns downloading, e-mailing, or printing supporters’ names and addresses and then disclosing them publicly.

Key Points

- We’ve already seen how publicly revealing political donors with the intent of doing harm (known as “doxing”) can ruin careers and corrode civil discourse.
- Givers would have good reason to fear being doxed—especially in today’s toxic cultural climate.
- Everyone deserves a voice, not merely those able to weather abuse.

Key Facts

- California’s blanket demand for the names and addresses of charity supporters is dangerous, unnecessary, and uncalled-for.
- The California Attorney General’s office leaks confidential records like a sieve. That’s especially dangerous for donors and employees of nonprofits like Thomas More Law Center, who have faced intimidation, death threats, hate mail, boycotts, and even an assassination attempt from ideological opponents.
- California requires *all* nonprofits that want to fundraise in the state to provide all their major supporters’ information every year—with no reason to think they’ve done anything wrong. This exposes sensitive information for supporters of organizations across the political spectrum.

The Bottom Line: *Every* American should be free to support causes they believe in without fear of harassment or intimidation.