

CATHOLICS DIVISION

UNITED

SOWS

Leading up to the election there was a dispute between Catholics United—a dissident Catholic group which sought to criminalize speech—and the Susan B. Anthony List (SBA List), a pro-life group which represented the position of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and had the support of the ACLU. Moreover, Catholics United took a direct shot at the bishops by claiming, in effect, that the USCCB got it wrong when it concluded that abortion funding was contained in the health care bill.

Two years ago, Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput accused Catholics United of doing a “disservice to the Church.” He was right. The group sought to censor the speech of the SBA List, claiming it misrepresented the record of Rep. Steve Driehaus: the SBA List said that when Driehaus voted for the health care bill, he voted to support “taxpayer-funded abortion”; it sought to launch a billboard campaign alerting voters about this, but was challenged by Catholics United saying that the SBA List was guilty of making “false statements” in campaign advertising. The dispute, which is before the Ohio Elections Commission, has yet to be resolved; if the SBA List loses, it faces criminal charges.

Catholics United said that Francis Cardinal George, the head of the USCCB, got it wrong when he said the health care bill “appropriates billions of dollars in new funding without explicitly prohibiting the use of these funds for abortion.” It further maintains that a unanimous opinion of the legal experts advising the bishops got it wrong when they came to the same conclusion as Cardinal George. And it also claims that the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service got it wrong when it concluded that abortion funding is allowed under the bill.

It is clear that Catholics United wants to muzzle the free speech of the SBA List and is actively undermining the bishops of the United States.