

AMICUS BRIEF FILED IN LANDMARK CASE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an amicus brief that was filed yesterday:

On May 27, the Catholic League, represented by the Pittsburgh law firm Jones Day, filed an amicus brief with the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to support the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. The case involves alleged abuse to plaintiff Renee Rice that occurred in the 1970s and early 1980s by a now-deceased priest. It stands to be a landmark case.

Ms. Rice did nothing to investigate her claims for almost 40 years. Under clear legal precedent, Ms. Rice's claims have been time barred since 1983. Yet, as an outgrowth of the badly-flawed Pennsylvania grand jury report that targeted Catholic dioceses, the intermediate appellate invented a wholly-new rule to allow the claims to proceed.

The court distorted decades of settled law, stripped away the diocese's legal defenses, and ignored the Pennsylvania Constitution. This type of breathtaking judicial legislation resulted in waves of new case filings across the State by the eager plaintiffs' bar and drove the Harrisburg diocese into bankruptcy.

We hope the Pennsylvania Supreme Court will follow the overwhelming number of courts around the country who have dismissed claims like these at the very outset. Indeed, it defies law and common sense to allow a plaintiff to seek damages for alleged harm that occurred decades ago, when they have done nothing in the interim. Only the plaintiffs' lawyers, and the shameless Pennsylvania Attorney General, will benefit from bad results like these.