

APOLOGY ACCEPTED

James Oberweis, a candidate for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate seat in Illinois, called William Donohue on November 6 to apologize for making an offensive remark. Donohue accepted the apology and the two men ended their conversation on a friendly note. Here's what happened.

On two occasions recently, Oberweis, who is Catholic, explained that the reason he is not a pro-life candidate is because that would put him in the same camp with the Taliban. He was quoted in the *Springfield Journal Register* as saying, "I think the Taliban is the best example that we've ever had about what is wrong about my trying to impose my religious views on you." On the "Steve Dahl Show" (WCKG-FM), Oberweis said, "I think that right now we're getting a very, very strong symbol in the Taliban of what can happen if we try to impose our religious beliefs on others."

We contacted Oberweis asking him to respond to our news release of October 29 demanding an apology. He responded by saying he had not received all of our e-mail correspondence, so we sent it again. But there was no response. Then, in a story in the November 1 edition of the *Chicago Tribune*, Oberweis said that while he concedes that his comparison was "probably not the best analogy," he has no intention of apologizing for his remarks.

At that point William Donohue hit him with his second news release in three days. Here is what he said:

"James Oberweis compares those who want to stop the killing of innocent babies to those who routinely stone to death women and starve little children. He said this not once, but twice. This was deliberate, calculated and designed to smear his opposition. When given the opportunity to apologize, he digs himself in deeper by refusing to do so.

"We have news for Oberweis: the Catholic League is prepared to go toe to toe with him and will now commence a media campaign providing free advertisement for his despicable comments. We are exploring several opportunities and will shortly decide on a specific strategy."

Many newspapers picked the story up and it became a hot topic on talk radio. On November 5 we e-mailed Oberweis and then called his office on November 6 giving him one more chance to apologize. Donohue had just finished writing an ad that he was going to run in the diocesan newspaper of Rockford, Illinois, when he was notified that Oberweis was on the line.

Oberweis expressed his regrets at what he said and emphasized that all his children attended Catholic schools and that he has a brother-in-law who is a priest. More to the point, he apologized for what he said.

To be fair, Donohue issued a news release clearing Oberweis' name. "I am delighted that James Oberweis called me to discuss his regrettable remark," Donohue said. The Catholic League president then got specific: "Oberweis convinced me that a) he is sorry he made this comment b) it was not his intention to malign pro-life lawmakers and c) he will never make such a remark again."

Donohue ended his remarks by saying, "That's enough to satisfy me and, I trust, should be enough to satisfy everyone else. Oberweis was cordial, sincere and honest. Those are qualities that can carry him a long way."

We are delighted that the press picked up on our statement and that this flap ended on a happy note.