

CALIFORNIA BILL ON CONFESSIONAL SEAL AMENDED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest news regarding the attempt to break the seal of the confessional:

On May 16, the California Senate Appropriations Committee conducted a hearing on a bill by State Sen. Jerry Hill, SB 360, that would gut the seal of confession, all in the name of catching sexual molesters looking for absolution. Some amendments were passed which, while a definite improvement, are still unsatisfactory.

Hill's latest iteration maintains the seal of confession for most Catholics. But he wants to make an exception when (a) a priest is hearing the confession of a co-worker ("another person employed in the same facility or location as that clergy member") and (b) when a priest is hearing the confession of another priest ("between a clergy member and another clergy member"). The assumption, which is invidious, is that many priests are predators.

Our sacraments should never be considered the legitimate domain of the state. This is a classic example of state encroachment on religion. Not only that, it is aimed at only one religion, despite what Hill's backers say.

Imagine saying that a psychiatrist can continue his privileged confidential relationship with his patients except when he counsels a colleague! Similarly, imagine saying the same to lawyers and journalists—they can keep their communication with their clients and sources confidential save for those that involve their co-workers!

No psychiatrist, lawyer, or journalist worth his salt would consider this a compromise: they would label it a travesty of

justice and pursue it in the courts. That's what Sen. Hill is faced with.

We implore Sen. Hill to withdraw his bill. There are many things that can and should be done to combat the sexual abuse of minors, but not among them are proposals that do violence to the First Amendment. If he stands fast, he will lose in the courts.

We are asking our California members to contact their state senator. Click [here](#) to do so.