

# CALIFORNIA SCHEMING; BILL NAILS CHURCH

California lawmakers are selectively targeting the Catholic Church by pushing a bill that would lift the statute of limitations for one year on cases of the sexual abuse of minors; it exempts all public institutions, including the public schools. Fighting the discriminatory law are Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez, the California Catholic Conference and the Catholic League.

Prior to the Civil War, we had one law for whites, and one law for blacks. In 1868, that was rectified when the equal protection before the law provision was encoded in the 14th Amendment. Now California Sen. Jim Beall wants to turn the clock back: he wants one law for public schools and another for Catholic schools. Differential legislation can be justified in many instances, but not when it comes to crime and children.

Bill Donohue registered his objections to Beall's bill by sending a detailed letter to every member of the California legislature; see pp. 4-5 [click [here](#)]. He followed up with a news release disputing Beall's reasoning for promoting the bill.

"Public schools and teachers have been held to a higher standard of care when it comes to the protection of children and reporting of child sexual abuse, than have the clergy and private youth-serving institutions," said Beall. Not true.

In 2007, AP did a major investigation of the public schools and found widespread sexual abuse of minors, a breakdown in enforcement, resistance from teachers' unions to do anything about it, and grossly inadequate legislation. California was specifically cited for its negligence.

They are not shutting down Catholic schools to clean house—they are shutting down schools like Miramonte Elementary in South Los Angeles. In a subsequent audit of the Los Angeles Unified School District released last year, many highly indefensible infractions were cited. Moreover, school districts in San Jose and elsewhere are still telling teachers not to report cases of sexual abuse to the authorities. And unlike Catholic schools nationwide, there is still no mandatory training program for teachers and staff on how to combat this problem.

Beall's bill got by the Senate and the Assembly Committee on the Judiciary; it has been sent back to the Senate for refinement. Its fate is still uncertain, and it is not known whether Gov. Jerry Brown will sign it if it reaches his desk.

In 2008, California lawmakers unanimously passed a bill that treats public schools and private schools as equals in the application of the law on the sexual abuse of minors. They should not be turning the clock back now.