

CALIFORNIA SENATE PASSES CONFESSIONAL BILL

Bill Donohue comments on a vote yesterday by the California state Senate:

In a frontal assault on religious freedom, the California state Senate yesterday voted overwhelmingly to require Catholic priests to violate the seal of the confessional.

By a 30-4 vote, the Senate passed SB360, requiring Catholic priests to report to civil authorities when a penitent confesses to sexual abuse of a minor. The bill received the votes of 27 Democrats and 3 Republicans. Four Republicans voted No, while three Republicans and one Democrat did not vote.

While the bill had previously been amended to include only confessions from fellow priests or co-workers, it is still an unacceptable intrusion by government into a sacred sacrament of the Catholic Church. We stand with Los Angeles Archbishop Jose Gomez in calling on California's government to strengthen mandatory reporting requirements while respecting "the sanctity of penitential communications."

This bill is absolutely unenforceable. No priest is going to respect it and violate the sanctity of the confessional. Moreover, Catholics are not required to respect unjust laws—and this is a clear example of such a law.

The bill now moves to the state Assembly, where hopefully more enlightened minds will see through its false presumptions. It is all smoke and mirrors. It will do nothing to help protect minors from the scourge of sexual abuse.