

# CALIFORNIA SEX ABUSE BILL IS ALIVE



Bill Donohue comments on the June 18 vote by the California Assembly Committee on the Judiciary that keeps alive a bill that lifts the statute of limitations for one year on

cases of the sexual abuse of minors; it applies only to private institutions:

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.

“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. [I cited the audit and

other matters in a recent [letter](#) to California lawmakers.] 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.

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. When it comes to safeguarding children, we need one law for everyone. To do any less is a violation of the 14th Amendment.