

CALIFORNIA SEX ABUSE BILL SHOWDOWN



Bill Donohue comments on the
fate of SB 131:

Tomorrow, the California Assembly Appropriations Committee will once again take up the issue of suspending the statute of limitations for cases involving minors who allege they are victims of sexual abuse. SB 131 would allow anyone who was 26-years-old in 2002, and claims to have been molested, one year to file suit. To those interested in justice, the bill appears to be fair. But there is just one problem: most of those who meet the criteria are not legally permitted to file suit. How can this be? Because it does not apply to anyone who was violated by a public employee, such as a public school teacher, aide, counselor or coach. For them—and they account for the lion's share of abuse—it's just too bad.

The purpose of this outrageous bill is to sock it to the Catholic Church. In California, lawmakers already suspended the statute of limitations for private institutions; they did so in 2003. But public school teachers have never been subjected to this condition. In other words, the bill is nothing more than a vindictive effort to punish the Catholic Church.

Leading the fight against this bill are the California bishops, and the California Catholic Conference; we are particularly taken by the aggressive leadership of Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez. We are proud to play a support role:

The Catholic League has contacted well over 10,000 members in California asking them to weigh in on this issue.

If California lawmakers are truly serious about combating the sexual abuse of minors (most surely are), then they should a) not make exceptions for private or public institutions and b) concentrate on current cases of abuse. To do any less—to carve out a privileged position for some, or to focus on the past, not the present—is an exercise in grandstanding. It is not what leadership is all about.

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