

CAN CATHOLICS BE ELECTED TO THE FEDERAL BENCH?

Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor was voted out of the Senate Judiciary Committee on July 23 by a vote of 10-9, along party lines. One of the issues surrounding his nomination to the federal appeals court in Atlanta is whether his critics are anti-Catholic. Catholic League president William Donohue addressed this issue today:

“To charge a sitting Senator as being anti-Catholic is serious business. I make no such charge. But this does not empty the issue.

“Bill Pryor is being subjected to a *de facto* religious test; his Catholicism has indeed become a factor in his nomination. How? Pryor’s deeply held opposition to abortion as a moral issue, as well as his deeply held opposition to the jurisprudential reasoning as evidenced in *Roe v. Wade*, have made him a lightning rod for abortion-rights advocates. In other words, it is precisely Pryor’s religious convictions that are being scrutinized. Given the cast of mind of some of his critics, it makes it virtually impossible for practicing Catholics to ascend to the federal bench.

“The rejoinder as provided by Senator Richard Durbin is disingenuous. Being a Catholic himself, Senator Durbin holds that he would certainly not reject a Catholic nominee because of his Catholicism. So far so good. But it’s not that simple. Senator Durbin argues that there is no one proper position on abortion for Catholics to take, so how could Pryor’s Catholicism be the problem? Durbin is dead wrong.

“Catholic teaching on abortion is unequivocal: it is gravely sinful. This is not a matter of dispute—it is a matter of doctrine that all Catholics are expected to uphold.

Especially public officials.

“In short, Senator Durbin’s riposte fails miserably. Bill Pryor is, in fact, being vetted for his religious convictions, however indirectly. This is outrageous and that is why I have written to every Senator asking that such a litmus test be jettisoned.”