

CATHOLIC LEAGUE TO NY STATE SENATORS: UNDO BAN ON ABSTINENCE PROGRAMS

Here is an excerpt of Catholic League president Bill Donohue's letter to New York State Senators regarding abstinence programs:

I am appealing to you to introduce legislation that would reinstate the right of New York State to receive federal funding for abstinence-only sex education. This is needed because of the unilateral decision made by New York State Health Commissioner Dr. Richard F. Daines to reject \$3.5 million a year in federal grants for such programs. His decision is not only without merit (he provided absolutely no evidence for his position), it would, if not overturned, have an adverse impact on Catholic institutions.

It may be a matter of coincidence—or it may not be—that the very same day Dr. Daines rendered his ruling, September 20, the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) just happened to have come to the same conclusion. In its report, “Financing Ignorance: A Report on Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding in New York,” the NYCLU maintains, on the basis of pure conjecture, that federal funding to schools that promote abstinence smacks of religious bias. Its reasoning: 53 percent of the schools that receive public monies for abstinence programs are religious.

On p. 37 of its report, the NYCLU lists 17 religious-affiliated organizations that receive federal grants for abstinence programs. Fourteen of them, or 82 percent, are Roman Catholic institutions. Thus, it is evident that such entities would bear an undue burden if Dr. Daines' decision were to go unchallenged. While his motive may be without

religious bias, the effect of his ruling surely would not be.

If legislation is not passed restoring the status quo ante, Catholic institutions will be presented with a Hobson's choice: either they violate their doctrinal prerogatives and accept the money, or they stick to principle and be punished for doing so. That is why I am urging you to do what you can to see to it that Catholic institutions are not penalized for being Catholic.