CHRISTIANS EXCLUDED IN NYC SCHOOLS: COUNCILMAN AVELLA SEEKS TO END DISCRIMINATION

Yesterday, New York City Council Member Tony Avella introduced his Department of Education Holiday Display Resolution (Reso. 930/2007). Avella's bill calls for a nativity scene to appear alongside the menorah and crescent and star in New York City schools. Currently, the schools allow only a Christmas tree, a secular symbol of the Christian holiday, to stand in its winter holiday displays. On Sunday, Avella held a press conference on the steps of City Hall to discuss this resolution. He was joined by Catholic League president Bill Donohue, Brian Rooney of the Thomas More Law Center, representatives from the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Knights of Columbus and Andrea Skoros, the plaintiff who first brought this injustice to the courts. They were flanked by a big crowd of supporters.

Commenting on Avella's bill is Bill Donohue:

"Though a federal appeals court upheld the legality of excluding a crèche, the court disagreed with the city's claim that the menorah and the star and crescent are secular symbols and added, 'We do not here decide whether the City could, consistent with the Constitution, include a crèche in its holiday displays.' Accordingly, it is up to the Department of Education to decide whether to treat Christian students with the same respect it shows students of other faiths.

"Councilman Avella's bill calls on the Department of Education to practice inclusion and end discrimination against students adhering to the Christian faith. Councilman Jimmy Oddo has agreed to be a co-sponsor of the bill, which was submitted to the Education Committee. Avella is currently seeking

additional co-sponsors.

"We salute Tony Avella and Jimmy Oddo for their efforts, and we are eager to see how all the other councilmen will react to this resolution."

Write to Councilman Robert Jackson, chair of the Education Committee,   by visiting http://www.nyccouncil.info/constituent/email_form.cfm?con_id=76.