

COLORADO ABUSE BILL SCRATCHED

On May 4, Colorado lawmakers finally decided to scratch a controversial section of a child sex abuse bill that was under consideration.

House representatives in the Colorado legislature rejected a proposal that would have allowed a one-year window for alleged victims of child sexual molestation to sue for cases dating back to 1971. It was a victory for justice, led by Archbishop Charles Chaput, Bishop Michael Sheridan and Bishop Arthur Tafoya. And special thanks must also be given to those cocky lawmakers who thought that by extending the law to cover public institutions, it would force the Catholic side to retreat.

"What has been happening in Colorado will go down in history as one of most egregious examples of anti-Catholicism ever launched by state lawmakers," we told the media.

It began when three bills were introduced earlier this year that sought to single out the Catholic Church for punitive measures. The bills were aimed at either removing or modifying statutes of limitation in cases of child sexual abuse committed by those who work for private institutions. Everyone conceded that the bills were targeted at the Catholic Church. When the Catholic bishops rightfully objected to these discriminatory measures, the bills were amended to blanket public institutions. This relieved the immediate concerns of the bishops, though as later amendments were introduced, they registered principled objections to some provisions.\

The public school establishment's insurance agents started sweating bullets once they learned that their clients could be sued, and it was their resistance that proved crucial in killing the bill. In other words, those who feigned interest in protecting the kids proved to be far more interested in

protecting their pocket books.

A new bill that would hold churches and nonprofits liable for up to \$732,500 in these lawsuits was briefly entertained. The amount of damages for public schools, however, was capped at \$150,000. "We'd love to see what would happen," we said in our news release, "if the figures were reversed."

State Senator Joan Fitz-Gerald, and Rep. Gwyn Green, both Democrats, pledged to push for similar legislation next year. We'll be ready.