

Congressional Inquiry Sought on D.A. Who Bugged Priest

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights has called for a congressional investigation of the office of Doug Harclerod, the District Attorney in Lane County, Oregon. On April 22, Harclerod ordered the taping of a confessional in the Lane County Jail; Father Tim Mockaitis administered the Sacrament of Reconciliation to suspect Conan Wayne Hale. On May 3, news reports disclosed that the confession was bugged by D.A. Harclerod.

Catholic League president William Donohue explained the league's decision today:

"The Catholic League has called upon the offices of Representative Charles Canady to investigate the offices of D.A. Doug Harclerod. Congressman Canady is Chairman of the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution and is therefore in a position to conduct this inquiry.

"At stake is the sanctity of the confessional, a central exercise of religious freedom for Roman Catholics. For over 200 years this sacrament has been afforded a confidential status by the state and has been enshrined in law by several U.S. Supreme Court decisions. In 1973, in *Doe v. Bolton*, the high court stated that 'The right to privacy has no more conspicuous place than in the physician-patient relationship, unless it be in the priest-penitent relationship.'

"The Sacrament of Reconciliation is predicated on strict confidentiality between priest and penitent and cannot be compromised for any reason. The league's call for a congressional inquiry comes on the heels of an appeal it made to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. In addition, the league is prepared to fight this case in the courts and will not

yield until justice is done.”

The Catholic League is the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization. It defends individual Catholics and the institutional Church from defamation and discrimination.