

# CONNECTICUT BILL SHOULD EXEMPT CONFESSIONAL

Last week, the Connecticut state House passed a bill that would require Catholic priests to report allegations of child sexual abuse disclosed in the confessional. Now the state Senate has struck down this provision arguing that an exemption must be made for the confessional. State law in Connecticut requires clergy to report to civil authorities any allegation of child molestation but does not specifically provide for a confessional exemption. The final fate of the bill will be determined today.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on the bill today:

“The state House in Connecticut should ratify the decision made by the state Senate that allows for a confessional exemption. Not to do so would be to allow the legitimate concerns over child sexual abuse to devolve into a church-state scandal of its own. It has long been respected that what is said between a penitent and a priest is no one else’s business. That would certainly include agents of the state.

“The fact that the state House voted 144-2 to mandate that priests turn over to the authorities allegations of child sexual abuse heard in the confessional is disconcerting. Constitutional guarantees providing for separation of church and state do not become suspended simply because some in the Church act irresponsibly.

“The Catholic League is also concerned over reports that an anti-Catholic tone was evident during the debate in the House. This charge, made by State Senator John McKinney, is a serious one. It is our hope that the scandal in the Church is not read as a green light by bigots. If it is, we will

certainly fight them.”