

Connecticut Pols Cross Church-State Lines

Today, Bill Donohue sent the letter below to members of the Connecticut General Assembly:

Dear Connecticut Legislator:

I have no doubt that all of you share my contempt for state officials who ask patently illegitimate questions of expert witnesses who testify before them. Unfortunately, two members of the state legislature, Representative Michael Lawlor and Senator Edwin Gomes, did just that on March 26.

To be specific, both men asked a series of questions of Brian Brown, executive director of the Connecticut Family Institute, that probed his religious convictions as they pertained to same-sex marriage. If you think I'm exaggerating, listen to the audio at http://ctnv1.ctn.state.ct.us/J/jud_3-26-07.wmv. or read our transcription of the relevant portions of the discussion by visiting http://catholicleague.org/3-26-07_transcript.htm.

It is entirely legitimate to ask witnesses about the source of their convictions, religious or otherwise. But when the questions become personal, intrusive and persistent, a line is crossed. Mr. Brown was not called to testify about his personal religious beliefs, but to explain why he takes the side he does on a public policy matter. Separation of church and state, it needs to be stressed, cuts both ways: Just as it would be illegitimate of me to ask Rep. Lawlor and Sen. Gomes to go on record explaining their personal convictions about the wisdom of Catholic teachings, it is equally illegitimate of them to pepper expert witnesses about their private beliefs.

Senator Joseph Lieberman is an Orthodox Jew who cares deeply

about Israel. As well he should. It would be obvious—even to Lawlor and Gomes—that a line would be crossed if Senator Lieberman were subjected the kind of probing questions regarding his religious convictions that Mr. Brown was.

I hope this is the last time I have to address this issue. Rep. Lawlor and Sen. Gomes should rest assured that if this continues, my response next time will not be in the form of a letter.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.

President

Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

NB: To view a video on AirMaria.com showing highlights of the relevant portions of Mr. Brown's testimony, [click here](#).