

CUOMO NEEDS TO STEP ASIDE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on accusations of sexual harassment against New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo:

Gov. Andrew Cuomo needs to step aside immediately pending an investigation into allegations of sexual harassment in the workplace. In doing so, he would simply be taking the same medicine he has prescribed for the Catholic Church.

If a priest is accused of sexual misconduct, the Church's zero tolerance policy insists he must step aside pending an investigation. Initially, this policy was directed at offenses committed against minors. However, in 2017 and 2019, Pope Francis said that zero tolerance must also be applied to sexual offenses committed against "vulnerable adults," defined, in part, as those in a state that "limits their ability" to "want or otherwise resist the offense."

According to allegations made by Lindsey Boylan, she would qualify as a "vulnerable adult." The former high-ranking official in the Cuomo administration has accused the governor of a series of sexual offenses, ranging from unwanted sexual touching to kissing her against her will. She has also accused him of intimidation, thus underscoring her vulnerability. "He used intimidation to silence his critics. And if you dared to speak up, you would face consequences."

Boylan claims that other women have also been sexually harassed by Cuomo. We know that Karen Hinton, for instance, a former Cuomo aide, has accused him of "penis politics." This would seem to bolster Boylan's point that Cuomo "created a culture within his administration where sexual harassment and bullying is so pervasive that it is not only condoned but expected."

What makes Boylan's accusations so rich is that in 2018 Cuomo said, "There must be zero tolerance for sexual harassment in

any workplace, and we can and will end the secrecy and coercive practices that have enabled harassment for far too long.”

In 2019, he signed legislation to combat this problem. “There has been an ongoing, persistent culture of sexual harassment, assault and discrimination in the workplace, and now it is time to act.” He even lowered the bar as to what constitutes sexual harassment.

“By ending the absurd legal standard that sexual harassment in the workplace needs to be ‘severe or pervasive’ and making it easier for workplace sexual harassment claims to be brought forward,” he said, “we are sending a strong message that time is up on sexual harassment in the workplace and setting the standard of equality for women.”

In light of what Boylan said he did to her, her allegations meet this test.

Cuomo denies the charges and should be treated as an innocent man. It must be said, however, that he has a history of not affording a presumption of innocence to others accused of sexual offenses.

When Brett Kavanaugh was nominated to be a Supreme Court Justice, the judge was accused by Christine Blasey Ford of a sexual offense that he allegedly committed when he was in high school. He denied the charge. But that didn’t stop Cuomo from calling her a “sexual survivor,” even though not a single witness came to her defense. “To Dr. Christine Blasey Ford and all survivors of sexual assault,” Cuomo said, “we believe you and we will fight for you.”

We can only imagine how Cuomo would react if I said, “To Lindsey Boylan and all survivors of sexual assault, we believe you and we will fight for you.”

For many years, Cuomo has treated accused priests the same

way. When has he ever stood up for their due process rights? Two years ago, after making sweeping accusations against the Catholic Church, he closed his remarks by saying, "You can't get a resolution without the truth and there are so many people and so many institutions that just don't want to hear the truth."

Well, Gov. Cuomo, it's time for you to take another dose of your own medicine. The public wants to know the truth about the charges levied against you. You can facilitate this process by taking a leaf out of the Catholic Church's playbook and step aside pending a probe of your alleged sexual offenses.

Contact Cuomo's press office: Press.Office@exec.ny.gov