

DEBATE OVER SCHOOL VOUCHERS GETS UGLY IN MILWAUKEE

In October, in the debate over school vouchers in Milwaukee, the Wisconsin state legislature considered an amendment to a school-choice bill that would require background checks of voucher-school employees. State Senator Gwendolynne Moore, who pushed for the measure, said she wanted to vest this authority in the Milwaukee Department of Public Instruction. The Milwaukee Archdiocese already conducts background checks, but this was not deemed sufficient by Moore.

State Senator Moore did not confine her remarks to the issue at hand. Instead, she repeatedly cited the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church. Those who objected to her amendment were accused of protecting “rapists.” Worse, she said the voucher schools would become a magnet for pedophile priests. She even opined that because private (non-Catholic) schools are not required to conduct background checks, predatory men who were thinking about entering a seminary might elect instead to teach in one of these schools.

Time and again we have seen that some opponents of school choice find it difficult to stay focused on the issue—they simply can’t resist taking a sucker punch against the Catholic Church. Before the scandal, they would argue that the Church was simply motivated by greed in advocating voucher programs. Now they maintain that opportunities to prey on the young are at work. And in the fertile imagination of State Senator Gwen Moore, Catholic men who think they have a vocation may decide to follow their real vocation in life—to molest kids—by signing up to teach in a private, non-parochial school.

It is not enough for the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* to write an exemplary editorial denouncing Moore for her remarks. That is why William Donohue wrote to State Senator Jon Erpenbach,

the leader of the Senate Democrats in the Wisconsin legislature, asking him to personally intervene in this matter by getting Senator Moore to apologize to area Catholics. We are awaiting his reply.