

ELIOT SPITZER: PRO-CATHOLIC OR ANTI-CATHOLIC?

In September, 1998, Eliot Spitzer, then a candidate for New York State Attorney General, held a press conference in front of a Catholic hospital in Buffalo to protest a decision by Independent Health that would exclude the area's Catholic hospitals from its coverage. Standing in front of Mercy Hospital, Spitzer said that "To simply exclude the Catholic hospitals from its coverage is heinous; it's irresponsible; it's wrong."

But just yesterday, New York State Attorney General Spitzer announced that he is forming a reproductive rights division that would, among other things, study the way the merger of Catholic hospitals with secular ones impacts on abortion rights.

Catholic League president William Donohue raised serious questions about Spitzer's latest decision:

"Candidate Spitzer showed nothing but compassion for the right of Catholic hospitals to participate fully in the health care of communities across New York State. Such participation, he knew, meant that Catholic hospitals would be free to determine their own prerogatives, including decisions that bar doctors from killing their patients, born or unborn. But now that he has been elected, Attorney General Spitzer apparently believes that Catholic hospitals are a community liability, and not an asset.

"Spitzer needs to explain himself. If the 'new Spitzer' is the real Spitzer, then it is clear that the Catholic League will have to study his decisions—and mount an offensive against him—should it mean that Catholic hospitals will be targeted for discrimination."