

GOV. SHAPIRO'S DUPLICITY IS ASTOUNDING

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When Josh Shapiro was the Pennsylvania Attorney General he went after the Catholic Church with a vengeance for allegations of sexual abuse made against priests, most of whom were either kicked out of the Church or were dead. How ironic it is to note that now that he is governor, he is in hot water over his handling of sexual misconduct in his administration.

Shapiro has been governor since the beginning of the year, and he is already caught up in a shady deal that makes him look like a raging hypocrite. To wit: His office recently wrote a check for \$295,000 to settle a sexual harassment complaint against one of his top advisors, and in doing so the public was intentionally kept in the dark. Looks like Mr. Transparency is caught in a web of deceit and hypocrisy.

The advisor in question is Mike Vereb, Shapiro's longtime buddy and member of his cabinet. In September, he abruptly resigned. Known in Harrisburg as a womanizer, the woman who brought him down accused him of multiple offenses. In her formal complaint, she said that aides in the administration had joked about her having a sexual relationship with Vereb (her name has not been made public).

According to the accuser, who started working for Vereb in January, in February she told him about the rumors and he demanded to know what was being said. That's when things got dicey.

In reference to the gossip about their alleged encounters,

Vereb allegedly baited her, saying if that is what she wanted, he'd comply. "If you decided you wanted to do that," he said, "and go close the door to this office, tell me to bend you over this conference table, hike your skirt up, and [expletive deleted] you from behind, that would be our decision to make."

The woman accuser said Vereb advised her to "wear lower cut tops and shorten the slits in your skirts." When she told him she was not interested in having a sexual relationship with him, he said, "well [expletive deleted] you then."

Questions remain as to when Shapiro learned of his friend's behavior. We know it took more than a week before he said a word about his departure. We also know that months went by between the time of the complaint and Vereb's resignation.

One reason why we do not know more is because of the nondisclosure agreement (NDA): both the accuser and Vereb are barred from discussing this matter. Pennsylvania, unlike neighboring New Jersey, still has NDAs on the books. Gov. Phil Murphy signed legislation four years ago barring NDAs in settlement agreements involving sexual misconduct.

Apparently, Shapiro likes keeping the public in the dark. On January 18, lancasteronline.com ran a piece, "The Shapiro Team Failed Transparency Test." It was in reference to having more than 300 members of his transition team sign a NDA that barred them from publicly discussing their work. "And because the team is organized under the federal tax code as a so-called 'dark money' group, it does not have to publicly disclose the private interests that may be underwriting its work."

Shapiro's inauguration committee operated under the same cloak of secrecy. His donors are not known to the public. In the eleven months since he has been governor he has not shared his daily calendar, so the public hasn't a clue who is coming and going. His predecessor, Tom Wolf, did not operate this way, so Shapiro can't say he is following precedent.

Over the summer, Shapiro agreed to give the state's 80,000 union workers a 22 percent raise. But we know nothing of what transpired, and that is because Shapiro is keeping that a secret as well. On top of that, the legislature never voted for the over \$3 billion in new money.

All of this is in stark contrast to Shapiro's image as the great defender of the rights of those victimized by the Catholic clergy. This has angered many, including Democratic activist and civil rights advocate Julie Roginsky. "He made it clear that those kinds of abuses should not be covered up." But that is exactly what is happening in the Vereb case.

Shapiro's 2018 grand jury report on the Catholic clergy in Pennsylvania resulted in the prosecution of only two priests. But he knew from the get-go most of the accused priests were untouchable, either because they were dismissed, deceased, or their case was beyond the statute of limitations. This was a grandstanding show designed to elevate Shapiro's status as a brave fighter against sexual abuse. The Vereb matter shows what a joke this is.

None of the priests had a chance to defend themselves—there was no cross examination—and those who fought back won. The Catholic League filed an amicus brief on behalf of eleven priests who claimed that their reputational rights would be violated if their names were released to the public. We won 6-1 in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 2019.

The Catholic Church did away with NDAs years ago. Shapiro still has them, and he uses them to avoid scrutiny. In short, Mr. Transparency is a monumental fraud.