

Government

January 6



Tallahassee, FL – A Florida Supreme Court's 5-2 ruling ended the Opportunity Scholarship Program, which used public money to pay tuition for students who have left failing schools. The ruling ratified the anti-Catholic Blaine Amendment that was written into Florida's Constitution. The Blaine amendment comes out of the 19th century. Its purpose was to deny any public monies to Catholic institutions.

January 20

Washington, DC –The Democratic National Committee (DNC) posted on its website, within the "Catholic Outreach" section, a statement on the opposition to a voucher program designed to help Catholic schoolchildren affected by Hurricane Katrina. On the homepage of the DNC's website was a section entitled "Interview with Eleanor Smeal on Samuel Alito." In October 2005, Smeal said if Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito were to be confirmed, "the majority of the Court would be Roman Catholics, which would underrepresent other religions, not to mention nonbelievers."

January 25

Boston, MA – A Massachusetts House bill that would have required religious organizations to file annual financial statements with the state was defeated 147-3. Representative Marian Walsh's bill would have forced religious organizations with annual revenue of over \$500,000 to file annual financial reports and to report all real estate holdings to the attorney general's office.

February

Deltona, FL – The City of Deltona's acting city manager

removed three paintings from the lobby of City Hall because the works contained religious imagery. The paintings were part of the city's Black History Month celebrations, for which local artists and city employees displayed artwork. The works included "Going Home," which featured a New Orleans-style rendition of a street funeral procession, in which a priest with a collar stands among the procession holding a Bible; "Christmas Basket," showing a priest "bearing a basket of treats for a woman and her child;" and the third painting showing a man, wearing a cap with "I Love Jesus" on it, standing next to a priest. The city manager attempted to broker a deal by placing the paintings in a room typically off limits to the public. After a federal lawsuit was filed against the city, all the paintings were reposted.

Denver, CO – Three bills introduced in the Colorado State Legislature would have either removed or modified the statutes of limitation in cases of child sexual molestation involving private institutions. The bills would have left Catholic institutions, including churches and schools, open to prosecution. Public schools, however, were shielded under the provision of sovereign immunity.

Bill Donohue wrote a letter to all Colorado state legislators in response to the proposed legislation. The letter detailed the discriminatory intent of the bills, and asked lawmakers to treat all parties fairly by amending the bills or rejecting them.

Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput had said he had no problem with any law that fairly covered everyone. The Colorado Association of School Executives said they were "studying" the bills, while the Colorado Education Association (CEA) brazenly spoke out against them. The Catholic League told the press that what started as a Catholic-bashing crusade "opened Pandora's box for Colorado's teachers," putting them in a "lose-lose situation."

Rep. Terrance Carroll said that amending the bills to include public schools was just a ruse—he didn't think the bishops would support any bill that would lift the statute of limitations, even if all entities were covered. He said he was ready to "call the Catholic Church's bluff." After the bishops endorsed the revised bills, Carroll exploded the very next day saying their stance "thoroughly disgusts me."

On March 14 one of the bills, House Bill 1088, passed the Colorado Senate Judiciary Committee and was eventually signed into law. The bill removed the statute of limitations for criminal lawsuits but did not affect civil lawsuits, and covered both private and public entities. On May 4, Colorado lawmakers decided to drop the section of another bill that would have extended the statute of limitations. The decision came following resistance from the public schools' insurance agents after they found out their clients could be sued. The Catholic League responded, "those who feigned interest in protecting the kids proved to be far more interested in protecting their pocketbooks." Eventually, legislators failed to pass that bill, and the third bill in the Senate had already died.

Bill Donohue sent the following letter to Colorado lawmakers in response to three proposed bills that would have suspended the statute of limitations in response for child sexual abuse claims against private institutions. Catholic institutions would have been open to prosecution, but public institutions would have been protected.



February 14

Albany, NY – Two groups of Catholic school students, principals and parents from Brooklyn traveled to the state capital to discuss school vouchers with Assemblywoman Adele Cohen, who represented parts of Brooklyn. The assemblywoman

refused to discuss vouchers and instead lectured students from St. Patrick's School in Bay Ridge on how women should not be stay-at-home mothers. Cohen also refused to meet with a group from St. Bernadette's in Dyker Heights. She slammed the door in the faces of the pastor and the school's principal after the principal said the assemblywoman's refusal to meet would be remembered in November (election time). Cohen tried to spin the incidents by sending a letter to Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio. Cohen claimed she was victimized by the Catholic school groups and said in her letter, "It makes me wonder what kind of education the Church is providing in its schools." On March 3, Bill Donohue wrote to every member of the New York State Assembly, asking them to censure Cohen.

February 15

Harrisburg, PA – The Pennsylvania court system blurred the background of a photograph of the state Supreme Court in a brochure because it showed a courtroom with a mural of the Ten Commandments.

February 22

Concord, NH – New Hampshire House Bill 1127, proposed by Representative Mary Stuart Gile, mandated all members of the clergy to report instances of suspected child abuse to authorities, allowing no exceptions. The bill attempted to remove the priest-penitent privilege that has traditionally been granted by legislators. The bill was sent to be studied for the next year on a 208-111 vote and was not debated. Gile tried to pass a similar bill in 2003 and was defeated.

February 28

York County, VA – A federal judge ruled that a public school principal had the right to remove Christian-themed postings from a classroom. School officials removed the painting "The Prayer at Valley Forge" by Arnold Friberg along with a flier promoting the National Day of Prayer. Information about the

religious practices of Inca and Mayan civilizations was allowed to remain.

March 2

Hartford, CT – Bill Donohue wrote a letter to the Connecticut Legislature's Public Health Committee asking it to accede to the Connecticut Catholic Conference's request for a religious exemption for Catholic hospitals. The exemption would free the hospitals from being forced to provide emergency contraception to rape victims. Donohue stated in a letter,

Requiring Roman Catholic hospitals to abide by state strictures on the distribution of emergency contraception ineluctably violates both the religious liberty provision of the First Amendment and the establishment provision.

He also said that, "a Catholic institution cannot be considered Catholic if it is mandated to yield its religious prerogatives to the state." On March 6, Connecticut's State Victim Advocate, James Papillo, told the state legislature's Public Health Committee that forcing Catholic hospitals to give rape victims emergency contraception was anti-Catholic. On March 7, Lt. Gov. Kevin Sullivan called for Papillo to resign: he accused Papillo, a Catholic deacon, of abusing his office. On March 20, the legislation was allowed to die.

March 13

Chicago, IL—Rick Garcia, the political director of gay rights organization Equality Illinois, confirmed that he had called Chicago Archbishop Francis Cardinal George a bigot. Garcia said he did this because of the Cardinal's "opposition to the basic civil rights of gay people," and more specifically, Cardinal George's "opposition to the civil recognition of same-sex marriage." Gubernatorial candidate Jim Oberweis demanded Governor Rod Blagojevich remove Garcia from the governor's hate crimes commission because of the remarks.

March 14

San Francisco, CA – Mayor Gavin Newsom canceled his planned trip to attend the elevation of former San Francisco Archbishop William Levada to Cardinal, after Newsom read about the Vatican reissuing its policy on gay adoption. Newsom stated that the Church's position was "corrosive and divisive."

March 19

Golden, CO – Colorado state representative Gwyn Green interrupted Sunday Mass, claiming a letter (from Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput) that was read aloud was inaccurate. The letter addressed two state bills concerning statutes of limitation for crimes involving the abuse of children. When a radio host later re-read the letter to Green, she said she couldn't find an error in it.

March 21

San Francisco, CA – The San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in response to the Catholic Church's teaching that children have a right to be raised by a mother and father, and not any other combination. Among other things, the resolution called the church's teaching on adoption "hateful," "discriminatory," "insulting" and "callous." In response, the Thomas More Law Center sued the City and County of San Francisco on behalf of the 6,000 Catholic League members who live there.

March 22

St. Paul, MN – City of St. Paul Human Rights Director Tyrone Terrill evicted a toy rabbit, colored eggs and a sign with the words "Happy Easter" from the City Hall lobby. The display was expelled on the grounds it may offend non-Christians.

March 23

San Miguel, CA – The California Culture and Historical Endowment told Mission San Miguel that it was rejecting the non-profit group's application for one million dollars to help recover from earthquake damage. The Endowment rejected the request because a "sectarian institution," the Catholic Church, owned the mission.

March 31

Madison, WI – The Association of Faith-based Organizations filed a lawsuit claiming state employees were not being allowed to make charitable payroll deductions to certain charities. The Association claimed a rule on the matter discriminated against groups that require employees, board members and volunteers to share the groups' religious beliefs. Some of these groups believe homosexuality is a sin. State rules require charities receiving donations not discriminate on the basis of religion or sexual orientation in hiring staff and accepting members. In October, a federal judge ruled the state program may not exclude religious charities that use religion as a basis for employment or membership on their governing boards.

April 19

Washington, DC –At a *Christian Science Monitor* breakfast, Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean had this to say about the intersection of religion and politics: "The religious community has to decide whether it wants to be tax exempt or involved in politics."

May 23

San Diego, CA – A U.S. District Court ordered that a 43-foot cross atop Mt. Soledad be destroyed. On May 23 the San Diego City Council voted to continue a 17-year fight to keep the cross where it is. An atheist who was also a military veteran had filed a lawsuit, saying the cross was discriminatory because it sits on public land. The court rejected an effort

to give a private group ownership of the land. On August 14, President Bush signed a congressionally approved measure to transfer ownership of the land to the federal government. Proponents of keeping the cross where it is thought it would have a better chance of being allowed on federal property as opposed to state property.

May 31

Delta, CO – An artist filed a federal civil-rights lawsuit against the city of Delta after the city had two of the artist's paintings removed from its recreation center because they contained Bible verses. Sharon Marolf's paintings had been displayed until someone complained about being offended by the verses.

June

Albany, NY – The Catholic League filed an amicus brief in a lawsuit involving Catholic Charities. The case, *Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany v. Serio*, involved a New York state statute requiring religious charities' prescription drug plans to cover contraception.

June 8

Portland, OR –A federal judge ruled that a lawsuit accusing the Vatican of conspiring to protect a sexually abusive priest could move forward. The judge said the Vatican did not enjoy foreign sovereign immunity in this case because it supposedly knew the priest had a history of sexual misconduct. The Catholic League told the press that Jeffrey Anderson, the lawyer who sued the Vatican, has made millions of dollars suing the Catholic Church. We said about Anderson's most recent lawsuit, "What's really going on here is an attempt to fleece the Vatican by a multi-millionaire with an agenda."

June 15

Annapolis, MD – Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich fired Robert J. Smith from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Board for remarks Smith made about homosexual behavior (Smith was appointed to the transit board by Ehrlich). Smith, appearing on a local cable program during off hours, said, “the government should not proffer a special place of entitlement within the laws of the United States for persons of sexual deviancy.” Following a Metro board meeting, Smith confirmed he made the remarks and further stated, “Homosexual behavior, in my view, is deviant.” He said, “I’m a Roman Catholic.” The Catholic League responded, “The real issue here is the right of government employees to voice their religious convictions with impunity.”

July 11

Fort Collins, CO—The Fort Collins City Council decided that only a Christmas tree would be allowed on city property during the holiday season. The decision changed a previous one in which the council had ruled that a menorah would also be allowed on each night of Hanukkah. Councilman Ben Manvel said, “The Christmas trees aren’t a problem because they were originally pagan. If we allowed the menorah and a crèche, then we’d end up with a parade of other religious symbols.”

July 17

Washington, DC – On the Senate floor, Senator Arlen Specter (PA) made his argument for unlimited stem cell research by bringing up Galileo and Pope Boniface VIII, casting them as Catholic victim and victimizer. He said such attitudes “in retrospect look foolish, absolutely ridiculous.” The following day on the Senate floor, Senator Charles Schumer (NY) said “If you don’t like stem cell research, don’t use it for you or your family. But don’t tell millions of Americans who may not share your faith that they cannot use it, as well.” Schumer also called evangelical Christians “theocrats,” saying, “they want their faith to dictate what the government does. That, in

a word... is un-American." On July 19, Senator Tom Harkin (IA) responded to President Bush's veto of the bill that would have expanded embryonic stem cell research. Harkin said in a statement,

The President is closing his heart and mind to this fact, and putting himself in the company of people like Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino, who told Galileo it was heresy to claim that the Earth revolved around the sun, and not the other way around. Galileo was later sentenced to life imprisonment.

July 29

St. Bernard Parish, LA – The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Louisiana sent a letter to officials of St. Bernard Parish regarding a planned Hurricane Katrina memorial that included a cross bearing a likeness of Jesus' face. The ACLU told officials that putting such a memorial on public property would be a violation of the First Amendment. The ACLU also claimed that there was official government involvement in the memorial. Parish officials promised that the money, time, labor and land being used for the memorial were all donated. On August 29, the planned memorial was dedicated.

August 15

Sacramento, CA – A proposal by State Senator Abel Maldonado would have authorized state funds to be put toward the restoration of California's deteriorating missions. The bill failed to get the approval of the Senate Judiciary Committee. A spokesman for one of the other state senators said the problem was that the bill would have authorized money to be given to churches with ongoing services. The Catholic Mission San Miguel is just one of the historic structures that would have been helped by this bill.