

GOVERNMENT BULLIES SURGE; CATHOLICS FIGHT BACK

It's not clear where the worst abuses are taking place—New York State, Connecticut or San Francisco. In all three cases, some government officials have sought to bully the Church. Their goal is to silence Church leaders, and in every case they have been met with stiff opposition. The Catholic League has been integrally involved in all three battlegrounds.

On several occasions over the past several months, New York Assemblywoman Margaret Markey has come very close to succeeding in her effort to create a one-year window where those claiming they were abused by someone in a private institution [the target population is Roman Catholic priests] can sue regardless of how long ago the incident occurred. Under pressure by the Catholic community, she extended her bill to cover public institutions, and made other amendments as well.

Markey, feeling the pinch, lashed out at Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio for his opposition to her scheme. She even went so far as to put him on warning: keep it up and you may jeopardize the Church's tax-exempt status. Bill Donohue snapped back, saying that "she should get off her high horse and stop with her ugly threats against Bishop DiMarzio." The Catholic League let every single member of the New York State legislature know of its position.

Something similar happened in Connecticut. A few months ago, two lawmakers threatened to take over the administrative affairs of the Catholic Church in the state. Again, Catholics were mobilized and struck back. Because Bridgeport Bishop William Lori took the lead, he was then accused by some in the Office of State Ethics of violating the state's lobbying laws. Again, the Catholic League hit back hard, contacting all the

lawmakers about the initial “fascist stunt” and the subsequent attempt to bully the bishop. On July 1, after feeling the pinch from Catholics, and additional pressure from the state’s attorney general, the Ethics Office decided to drop the matter altogether.

A few years ago, the Thomas More Law Center, representing the Catholic League, sued San Francisco when its Board of Supervisors issued an inflammatory resolution condemning the Catholic Church for “meddling” in its affairs. The offense? The Vatican opposes gay adoptions! While the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals said the government did not violate the First Amendment, the case is still alive and may yet go before the U.S. Supreme Court.

In all three cases, these latest developments show how some state officials will not give up in trying to intimidate Catholic Church officials. And in two of the three instances, our side has come out on top so far.