

# JUSTICE IN DELAWARE AND MICHIGAN: TEACHERS AND MUSLIMS ARE A PROTECTED CLASS

In Delaware, House lawmakers approved a bill on June 19 that eliminates the two-year statute of limitations in cases involving the sexual molestation of minors.

But this bill only applies to private institutions, such as the Catholic Church. It does not apply equally to the public sector; under a legal concept known as sovereign immunity, public schools and other government entities can claim exemption from the elimination of statutes of limitations in sex-abuse lawsuits. In other words, it would be much harder to sue a public school district for sex abuse that occurred years ago, than it would be to sue the Church.

The degree of corruption in the Delaware legislature is matched only by the selective indignation its lawmakers have for child rape. The legislators are owned—lock, stock and barrel—by the teachers unions. Teachers can grope all they want. They can rape little kids. And under this bill, they will be protected by making it harder to go after them. Yet the most reliable data on this subject, presented by Dr. Charol Shakeshaft of Hofstra University, show that public school employees have the highest rate of child sexual abuse in the nation.

This sick game was played last year in Colorado. Three bills were introduced trying to stick it to private institutions while giving public ones a pass; thanks to public pressure, they did not succeed. When a bill was introduced that would blanket all institutions equally, one of the lawmakers owned by the teachers unions called the Catholic Church's bluff and said the bishops wouldn't support it. He was wrong. And so why

did the bills fail? Not because of resistance from the Catholic Church, but because of the teachers unions.

Sen. Karen Peterson, the principal sponsor of the Delaware bill, took umbrage at our charge that unequal justice was at work. Yet on June 21 she was quoted as saying that the bill allows victims to sue the state if they can meet the high standard of "gross negligence." How sweet. She further admitted that the state has the right to claim sovereign immunity, and that it is up to the courts to decide whether it should apply. Thus did she verify our charge that there are two standards in play.

On June 20, Rep. Greg Lavelle, who sponsored a separate bill mandating an equal playing field, called our office requesting data on public school teachers who abuse kids. The next day, he was quoted as saying our response "offended" him. Indeed, he even commended his colleagues for taking "all necessary steps to be sure that all children in Delaware are protected regardless of where they go to school..." Really? That being the case, Lavelle should have withdrawn his bill. To top it off, a lobbyist for the Diocese of Wilmington chimed in by criticizing the Catholic League. Lavelle's bill passed the House but faces an uncertain future in the Senate. If it dies, it remains to be seen how the diocese will react when lawsuits start coming in and public school teachers get to walk. Must be a tight-knit club in Delaware.

Meanwhile, Michigan taxpayers are being forced to pay \$25,000 for footbaths at the University of Michigan-Dearborn so that Muslim students can wash their feet. On June 5, Bill Donohue sent this letter to all Michigan state lawmakers:

*I was surprised to learn that the University of Michigan-Dearborn plans to spend \$25,000 for footbaths so that Muslim students can practice their religion without difficulty. What surprised me was the novelty: the trend in recent years has been for American campuses to neuter Christmas parties, ban*

*the display of nativity scenes and essentially censor the public expression of Christianity. But not at the University of Michigan-Dearborn—they're going the other way. Or are they?*

*Here's what I'd like to know. Do you regard this as accommodating religion or offering special privileges? If your answer is the former, would you be open to suggestions on how to accommodate the needs of Christian students on campus? I hope so because I have lots of ideas. If your answer is the latter, what are you going to do about it?*

*I look forward to hearing from you about this important issue.*

Of the Michigan lawmakers who responded to us, only one—State Sen. Gilda Z. Jacobs—defended the footbath arrangement. Interestingly, Jacobs was only one of two senators to vote against a bill in 2004 allowing religious and divinity students to win publicly funded scholarships. Jacobs said she was opposed to the “funding of seminaries.”

In her letter to us, Jacobs said that she hopes “religious intolerance” is not motivating critics of the footbath scheme. We hope her defense of religious discrimination is based on ignorance and not malice. And we urge Catholics to take note of her duplicity.

Not only did the ACLU defend the footbath plan in Michigan, so did Fox News regular Geraldo Rivera. On “Hannity and Colmes” on June 20, Rivera conceded that there are church-state problems, but then waxed sentimental over the allegedly besieged Muslims. Geraldo could not bring himself to criticize the privileged position afforded Muslims vis-à-vis others.

The elites have shown their real colors and it's not a pretty sight. Dishonesty, cowardice and bigotry make for a really sick stew.