

KANSAS CITY STAR'S RELIGIOUS BIAS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an editorial of March 2nd in the *Kansas City Star*:

The *Kansas City Star* is well known for its religious animus, especially against Catholic institutions (see our website for multiple examples). Its hostility was on display again on March 2nd.

In a badly conceived editorial, it railed against allowing private and religious schools to be exempt from Missouri's minimum wage increase. It is the exemption for religious schools [read: Catholic ones] that exercises the editors the most. How do we know? Because it repeatedly singles out religious organizations for criticism.

Why is the editorial badly conceived? Because it is palpably hypocritical. It admits that public employers, including the public schools, are exempt from the minimum wage law, yet it is only mildly critical of this exception. In other words, if exemptions from this law are a problem, why has the *Star* consistently refused to take the public schools to task?

Moreover, why hasn't the *Kansas City Star* listed all the organizations that are exempt from the minimum wage? Missouri employers are required to pay \$9.45 an hour unless the worker or occupation is exempt under state or federal law.

Here is a list of exemptions under Missouri law:

- Tipped employees
- Retail or service businesses whose gross annual income is less than \$500,000
- Most agricultural and farm workers

Here is a list of exemptions under federal law:

- Farm workers
- Seasonal workers (fishermen, amusement park workers, et al.)
- babysitters
- tipped employees
- minors and young workers
- full time and vocational students
- employees with disabilities
- public school teachers and administrators
- outside sales employees
- employees in certain computer-related operations
- companions to the elderly or infirm

On several occasions, the editorial raises the question why religious schools are afforded exemptions from some laws. But it is not religious schools that are routinely cut slack by state legislators—it's the public schools.

For example, the statute of limitations for crimes involving the sexual abuse of minors in Catholic schools does not apply to the public schools: victims of sexual abuse in the public schools have 90 days to file a claim or it is too late. But victims in Catholic schools have a much longer time frame within which to do so, and this is especially true when statutes of limitation are being revised to allow old cases to be prosecuted.

The public schools are able to get away with this because of the antiquated doctrine of sovereign immunity: it allows the public sector a privileged position by discriminating against private and religious institutions. But don't look for the *Kansas City Star* to protest this blatant injustice. It never will.

Contact Colleen McCain Nelson, editorial page editor:
cnelson@kcstar.com