

# MARYLAND GOVERNOR: FOE OF FREE SPEECH

On June 15, Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich fired Robert J. Smith, one of his Metro transit authority appointees, because Smith said that "Homosexual behavior, in my view, is deviant." Smith, who stressed he is a Roman Catholic, said that his characterization reflected his beliefs and were made after hours on a cable TV show. Ehrlich branded his remarks "inappropriate, insensitive and unacceptable."

Our response to the media was highly critical of Ehrlich:

"Ehrlich is a menace to free speech and a hypocrite, as well. In 2004, reporter David Nitkin and columnist Michael Olesker, both of the *Baltimore Sun*, incurred the wrath of Ehrlich when Nitkin was blamed for an incorrect map he had nothing to do with and Olesker was blamed for writing about someone's expression at an event he didn't attend. On a scale of one to ten, most would put these infractions closer to one than ten. But not Ehrlich—he ordered all state employees not to talk to either man ever again. This merited a *New York Times* editorial blasting the governor for 'promulgating an extraordinary ban forbidding tens of thousands of state employees from talking to two *Baltimore Sun* journalists whose coverage displeased him.' And the *Sun* sued Ehrlich.

"Yet when it comes to Maryland Democratic icon William Donald Schaefer, Ehrlich discovers the virtue of free speech. Schaefer, who is comptroller under Ehrlich (the governor is a Republican), went bonkers in 2004 when he had trouble ordering food at a McDonald's: 'I don't want to adjust to another language. This is the United States. They should adjust to us.' Ehrlich defended Schaefer at the time. And when, in the same year, Schaefer hammered AIDS patients, Ehrlich refused to criticize him.

“The First Amendment protects religious liberty and free speech, and Ehrlich respects neither. To top it off, he exhibits a double standard that smacks of elitism.”

The issue did not end there. On June 21, Bill Donohue was interviewed on a Baltimore radio program, “The Ron Smith Show” (WBAL). One of the callers was Maryland’s Secretary of Education Robert Flanagan. What began as a cordial disagreement quickly evolved into a heated exchange: after Donohue cited the *Catholic Catechism’s* teaching that homosexuality is “intrinsically disordered,” Flanagan denied this was true. It ended with Donohue blasting Flanagan for being so ignorant about his own religion.