

# MILITARY PRIESTS PENALIZED

The Obama administration, true to its anti-Catholic colors, took advantage of the partial government shutdown to deny some Catholic priests their right to say Mass. Threatened with a lawsuit by the Thomas More Law Center, the problem ended after the House and Senate agreed on a bill to resolve the debacle. Here is what happened.

There are not enough priests in the military to service all Catholics, which is why the government contracts with members of the clergy to celebrate Mass, baptize children, and the like. But when the shutdown occurred, many Catholic men and women in the armed forces were denied their constitutional right to practice their religion: non-active duty priests who are hired as government contractors were furloughed. For two weekends, October 5-6 and October 11-12, these priests could not say Mass.

The inter-party battles between Republicans and Democrats are of no particular interest to the Catholic League, but the denial of First Amendment rights are. There is absolutely no excuse to deny Catholic members of the armed forces access to their clergy. Worse, the very idea that a non-active duty priest who volunteers to say Mass may be arrested is shocking: this is the kind of thing we would expect from totalitarian regimes.

While both parties are to blame for the shutdown, it is the Obama administration that has decided to war on the civil liberties of Catholics; it has had plenty of practice. "It is one thing to deny services that carry no constitutional weight," Bill Donohue was quoted as saying, "quite another to censor the First Amendment."

A resolution was passed in the House on October 5 calling on Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel to allow these priests to

resume their duties. The Senate did nothing.

We urged Catholics to ask their senators, and Secretary Hagel, to end this disgraceful assault on the constitutional rights of Catholics immediately. We also supplied those who receive our e-mails the contact information at the Department of Defense. No doubt about it, Catholics were exploited by the administration for political purposes.