

NEBRASKA STATE SENATOR MUTILATES ROSARY BEADS

On January 9, the opening day of the new Nebraska legislative session, state senator Ernie Chambers distributed a packet of unusual Rosary beads to his colleagues. All of them had the crucifix chopped off. Chambers justified his decision to disfigure the Catholic devotional object by arguing that people of many religious beliefs find peace in what he termed the "counting beads."

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed this issue in a news release:

"Two months ago we called for the Nebraska legislature to censure state senator Ernie Chambers for the anti-Catholic remarks he made when a voucher bill was being debated. Now he's moved from anti-Catholic rhetoric to anti-Catholic behavior. Yet he remains undisciplined. Chambers' bigotry is also directed at whites and Jews. Consider this:

- On December 30, 2001, one of Chambers' constituents publicly charged that the state senator's recent memo on lead paint and children 'reeked of racism and hatred.'
- On December 21, 2001, the *Omaha World-Herald* published a bigoted letter by Chambers who wrote of 'Pampered, snooty white men such as George Will.'
- On March 8, 2001, Chambers' habitual references to 'the white man' got him tagged as 'one of the biggest racists in Omaha.'
- On January 13, 1996, Rabbi Aryeh Azriel of Omaha's Temple Israel openly criticized Chambers for his 'anti-Semitic remarks' and for his association with Louis Farrakhan.
- On Christmas Eve, 1992, Nebraska state auditor John Breslow, who is Jewish, accused Chambers of making a 'Hitler-like caricature' of him.

“If Chambers were white, he would have been censured long ago. But it’s not too late to treat him as an equal. That’s what we will request.”

Unfortunately, Chambers’ colleagues refuse to censure him. Like many state legislative bodies, it’s an old boys club in Nebraska. Which means that the longer you’re in office, the more you can get away with things. And it doesn’t hurt if you’re black.